



INSIGHT

*A meditator shines light on higher
planes of consciousness,
happiness and human potential.*

By Jess Peter Koffman



INSIGHT



*A meditator shines light on higher planes of
consciousness, happiness and human potential.*

Jess Peter Koffman

Inside credits

Written by: Jess Peter Koffman

Edited By: Salima Pirani and Lynn Perry

Copyright Jess Peter Koffman 2016

All rights reserved.

Published and printed by

Prima Publishing Company Limited

342 Soi Pattanakarn 30,

Suanluang, Bangkok 10250 Thailand

Tel. +6620126999

www.primapublishing.co.th

ISBN CODE:

“ *Sabbe Satta Abyapajjha Hontu*
May all beings be free from suffering. ”

Contents



Editors' Forewords	9
Buddhist Monk's Foreword	11
Introduction	15
 Chapter 1: The Realms of Existence	 21
The Human Realm	22
The Animal Realm	26
The Lower Realms	27
Understanding Cosmology	31
Heavenly Realms	32
Higher than the Heavens	35
Finding Our Way Around	38
A Glimpse into the Heavens	42
 Chapter 2: Souls, God and Religion	 51
Souls	52
Ego and Religion	56
Gods	58
Channels for Gods	62
Redefining God	66
Experiencing Gods and God States	67

Stuck in Samsara	69
Religions	72
 Chapter 3: Karma	 85
The Quality of Our Heart	87
Karma = Action	90
Karmic Results	92
The Four Types of Karma:	
Weighty Karma	99
Karma at Death	101
Habitual Karma	106
Non-habitual Karma	106
Moving Forward	108
How Mindfulness Helps	110
 Chapter 4: Human Potential and Enlightenment	 123
Masters, Teachers	127
The Higher Chakras	131
Enlightenment	136
Avatars	140
Bodhisattvas	142

Chapter 5: The Light	149
Reiki and the Light	152
Meditation: A More Effective Way	155
Chanting and the Light	157
The Breath and the Light	160
When the Light Appears	162
Mindfulness and the Light	165
Jhana	167
Entrance into the Heavens	168
The Shining Light of Mindfulness	174
Meditative Experiences	177
Formless Jhanas	178
Other Ways to the Light	179
 Chapter 6: A Conscious Evolution	 185
Forgiveness	190
True Love	195
Self-Awareness	201
 Chapter 7: Levels of Happiness	 213
Lower Forms of Happiness	214
The Happiness of Obtaining	218
Entertainment: Sustained Attention	220

The Happiness of Relief	226
The Overlooked Happiness of Morality	233
Happiness in Meditation	235
Lasting Happiness	237
Ultimate Happiness	240
Talk is Cheap	241

Chapter 8: Mind and Brain: What Religion and

Science Have Overlooked	245
Who am I?	247
True Knowledge Requires Mindfulness	250
Organic Mush	252
The Center of the Chest	255
We are not Physical	263
Where is the Mind?	266
The Pure Mind	270

Chapter 9: Justifying a “Me”

Self-Worth	278
Mental Chatter	281
Our Neglected Body	284
Imposing a “Me”	286

Becoming Natural, Naturally	290
The Movement of Consciousness	293
Waking Up from the Dream of Self	295
 Chapter 10: The Buddha and Mindfulness	 301
Conclusion	304
Tributes to Our Teacher	306
(Collected by the Editors)	
About the Author	314



Editors' Forewords

I have been a student of Jess Koffman for over four years now, studying and practising correct mindfulness and meditation. I can attest that Jess is a teacher with integrity, selflessness and great wisdom. He leads by example and with a pure heart, and always encourages his students to have their own direct experience of the truth of body and mind. It is a privilege and an honour to have such a revered teacher.

Working on this book has been a transcendent and humbling experience. I didn't know at the time how much this life-changing compilation would alter not only my daily life, but my existence as I know it.

Insight contains unique writings and experience. It is not a typical spiritual read. The insights and knowledge contained in the pages will change your perspective on life and death; it will have an effect on your relationships, on how you feel about yourself, your work, your meditation or prayer, and your life after this life! It is also an exceptional tool for those with ageing parents or friends in palliative care as the teaching on "karma at the time of death" is a must for everyone to know.

Each and every chapter offers small treasures to behold and reflect upon. As you journey through deep discussions on the realms of existence, the light, forgiveness or happiness, notice what speaks to your heart, and notice what may still be out of reach for your consciousness to consider. You may sense feelings of excitement, joy, curiosity and compassion arise, as I did.

Whether you appeal to your religious background or take logic and reason as your refuge, the profound lessons offered in this book will illuminate all that can be achieved. Take a leap, a trust-filled chance to venture outside of what is familiar and awaken the many possibilities that are available outside of our senses. These higher teachings along with our mindfulness practice will move us all closer to realising our potential, and together we will create a kinder world, happier homes, and quality hearts and minds.

Lynn Perry
Corporate Business Consultant
Certified Mindfulness Instructor
Toronto, Canada
June 2016



Buddhist Monk's Foreword

We all want happiness. But why are so few of us genuinely happy? Even the angels above are not able to escape suffering. Whether people or angels, the harder we strive for happiness, it seems the more suffering we encounter! Why is this so? Simply put, it is because we lack insight, a clear understanding of reality.

Jess Koffman is someone with a special kind of knowledge and vision. Learning from wise monks in Thailand, Jess has grown in his faith in the Buddha's teachings, and has been able to confirm many truths in his own experience. While still on his path to ultimate wisdom, he has sufficiently seen amazing truths through Buddhist practice and wishes to provide others the opportunity have such experiences themselves.

I appreciate Jess for his courage in bringing these challenging topics to the masses. May all readers open your hearts up wide to receive the benefits that this book brings.

Ajahn Krit Nimmalo

It has been a sincere honour to be part of this book.

I used to be a huge skeptic. Back in 2007, I asked Jess some tough questions. The way in which he answered them disarmed me. I had never seen such honesty, kindness, intelligence, insight, gentleness and humility in one person. Jess had been a friend since the mid 1990s, but in 2007 he emerged in his true role in my life, as my trusted and respected teacher. I never thought I'd learn so much! Without his influence in my life, I wouldn't be the person, the teacher or the healer I am today. From the most miraculous healing practices to the highest and purest studies in mindfulness, Jess has taught me everything I know. I am more patient, kind, open-hearted, understanding, powerful, peaceful and wise than I was before. The opportunity to learn from a true and pure heart and wise soul doesn't come along in every lifetime.

I have so much respect and sincere gratitude for Jess and the teachings he has brought not just to better my life, but also to guide me on my path to freedom and enlightenment.

I have learned lifetimes worth of lessons from Jess, lessons that are, at times, beyond words. For the

first time in human history, some of these lessons are now available to you, in this book. *Insight* contains what I consider to be, hands-down, the most valuable knowledge for humankind. I am both humbled and excited to be part of the important work of sharing it with you.

This book is a doorway for you. In reading it, you will better understand how life and reality work; you will see where you fit in this seemingly chaotic, bustling and crazy world of ours; and you will see how the quality of your heart and mind determines where you are heading. You will also find encouragement and guidance for improvement; in finding better and more reliable paths to happiness, joy and inner peace than you will find anywhere else.

I can honestly say that the source of this work is a pure one. Please proceed with an open heart, an open mind and a sense of adventure! This book has many layers, each reveals itself to you as you grow, experience, practice and develop. It's my hope that each time you pick up this book and whether you read a few paragraphs or a few chapters, that the knowledge contained in these pages will meet you where you are at, and be an inspiration, a marvel and a helpful

companion for you along your path.

Salima Pirani
Reiki Master Teacher,
Executive Mindfulness Coach
Toronto, Canada
June 2016



Introduction



I am not a writer. I am a meditator and mindfulness practitioner, a Canadian, who has immersed himself in Buddhist Thailand since 2001. I train my mind and seek spiritual wisdom with the help of some of the greatest masters on the planet. My experience of higher truths has been extensive, and my insights in to reality have been profound and transformational. It is now time to share my understanding with the world.

For the last five or six years, I have returned home to Toronto periodically to teach what I have learned and what I practice. Over these past few years, I can see the powerful, life-changing effects the teachings are having on my students; just as they have had for me through my own teachers.

My talks and courses are exclusively in the interest of the spiritual growth and mental development of my students. However, in this compilation adapted from talks I have given, I have included some fascinating topics that I scarcely discuss. The early chapters regarding the different realms of existence and rebirth are topics of which I have had direct

and undeniable experiences; nevertheless until now I have been reluctant to share them. My logical and mathematical mind of the past would have rejected notions such as rebirth, karma or the light, so I could not expect others to believe in them. Moreover, for students who would believe me, I felt it could incite endless curiosity, a dangerous distraction from their more vital practices of meditation and mindfulness.

Then in January 2015, during my usual walking meditation on a small mountain top monastery in Sriracha, Thailand, I was struck with, one could say, a divine message that appeared to me in the form of a light and an understanding. It was clear that I was to speak from experience about various unseen truths, and that somehow the benefits would outweigh the possibility of losing credibility or the risk of leading students and believers along a less skilful path.

I realized that having validated some “supernatural” truths in my own experience provided me with an understanding and a broader perspective that are essential to my path, and perhaps the pages ahead can provide the perspective, and incentive, that you need to walk yours.

When receiving teachings of a higher order, something deep within us, not our thoughts, is ignited. Intellectually, we could agree with or reject the teachings. We may feel confusion. We may enjoy and embrace, or despise and take offence. Any of these possibilities exist on a more superficial level than what I am referring to, and what I am speaking to. If we are open to learning while reading this, what happens is this deeper dimension within us becomes fascinated by what I say. A profound interest to experience some of the truths I share will emerge. There will be an impulse, a spark, for our consciousness to access these life-altering spiritual experiences, and to awaken to higher truths.

There is a memory, beyond our memory in this life that we may not be in touch with. When some things are spoken of that contain a higher truth, they may resonate with us in an inexplicable manner. A yearning to experience them is ignited and in some cases, a memory of them may be awakened. The teachings may feel familiar even though there is no conscious memory of ever learning them before, let alone experiencing them in this lifetime.

As a result of spending so much time deeply involved in the Thai monk community, it is no doubt that my teachings are heavily influenced by Buddhist understandings. However, I can say that the truth and value of what I teach has been verified in my own personal experience. If there is anything I say that I don't know for certain, then I am appealing to the greater understanding of my venerable teacher. I have seen into his heart, and it is completely pure. There is no ability on his part, for any misunderstanding or misrepresentation of the truth.

As you move through the chapters, you will see that I comment on a variety of spiritual topics; however, if there is any one underlying theme, it is presenting the different levels of consciousness available to us and their respective impact. At the end of each chapter, there is at least one question asked by a student, followed by my answer. The questions come from various events I have held in the past. My editors and I placed them where we thought they would be useful.

If you are only interested in personal development and not in the impact of rebirth and higher beings, then I recommend skipping the first three or four

chapters and joining the discussion on “the light” where we begin our personal transformation. The first four chapters, though vital for some, provide a broad context that others may not be willing to consider just yet.

I know some will not agree with various insights I provide in this book; nevertheless, I am still interested in your spiritual development. There will be no progress with a closed mind, and little progress with blind faith. True spiritual growth can only come within your own personal experiences of truth beyond the five coarse senses, and beyond thought.

It is an honour to have the opportunity to share *Insight*, and shine some light on the higher planes of consciousness that exist for and around you. Join me on this journey through all the realms of existence and then back to yourself.

I hope the teachings here clarify your path for you and at a minimum, create the necessary spark for your journey ahead. You may be surprised how magical the universe is and how vast is your potential.

From my heart to yours, let me show you.




“

*A tiny fraction of what's out there is
picked up by the eyes.*

We are virtually blind.


*And if seeing is believing, well,
we are blind in more ways than one.*

”



Chapter 1

The Realms of Existence



We are not alone in this cosmos. By saying this, I hope I am not causing a major rift in anyone's consciousness. To understand the contents of this book, we must be open to looking at our realm and other realms with a higher perspective. There are actually many kinds of beings in many different realms and I plan to go into some detail for us here.

I have had experiences of many realms and beings. Beings can be classified as belonging to one of three main realms. There is the realm of the senses, or the sense desire realms. I will go into this realm in detail. There are the form realms, which are peaceful with subtle bodies. Then there are the formless realms, which are even more subtle with no bodies. The form and formless realms are only known to those that inhabit them, and to humans with extremely powerful meditation experience. In general, all of human knowledge exists only in the sense desire realm.



The Human Realm



Humans are smack in the middle of the sense desire realm. This means if we take a look at our entire experience, we will see it is all based on gaining pleasure from the senses. We have a body, with eyes, ears, a nose, mouth and tactile abilities and we are completely consumed with seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and feeling. We believe these senses are here to provide the opportunity for pleasure and we are fiends for it. We want to see, hear, smell, taste and feel what we like and we don't want to see, hear, smell, taste or feel what we don't like. All of our experiences with money, family, relationships, entertainment, sex, vacations, spas, hobbies, achievements, material goods and gadgets, even stimulating conversations and philosophies are all in the interest of gaining happiness through the senses. This is the realm we are totally lost in. We are so lost in this realm of seeking pleasure from the senses that we do not even recognize that there is the possibility of any other realm, or any other type of pleasure. It seems like this is as good as it gets. Actually, it is just the realm of existence we are floating through, or put more directly, stewing in.

Even if we believe that there is an outside world with responsibilities, everything is being interpreted by

the eyes, ears, nose, tongue and the body. The eyes experience a certain range of light vibrations which are interpreted as shapes and colours. Ears also give us access to different vibrations. However, there is much that we cannot hear, like when we compare ourselves to dogs or bats. We think there is perhaps a little that we cannot see or hear as humans, because it is dark outside or because we are not acutely listening for predators, like our dogs and cats are. Perched here at the top of the food chain and believing the way science has placed us in the evolution chain, it is hard for us to admit that other animals, and certainly beings in different realms, can see, hear, and do significantly more than we can. The truth is, we see, hear and feel very little of what is actually out there. By “out there”, I mean even in our own living room!

Our senses work within a particular range of vibrations. For us, everything comes in through these senses, and we assume that what we see is what the world really looks like. We only believe it, if we see it with our own eyes! What a shame this is.

We also use these senses in one way or another to try to make everything pleasing. When our circumstances are not pleasing to our senses, we try to get away from them, or fix them, so that they can be more pleasing to the eyes, the ears, the touch and so on. For

example, we reside in a house or apartment now because we like it, we can afford it, and think that it is the most pleasing choice. The people in our life are here because we think they are the most pleasing people. If they are not being pleasant, we try to avoid them. Perhaps we hear our partner say something we interpret as unpleasant. Now, if we argue with our partner and win, we may stick around and then the senses can stay relatively pleased, hearing them or seeing them concede. If we continue to hear displeasing things, we storm out of the room! Why so? We can't handle the unpleasantness that the ears are picking up and how it makes us feel. We sit in a comfortable chair and get some peace and quiet. We believe the sense contact with that chair is more pleasing than how we felt when we were standing a moment ago, and we certainly prefer the sound of quiet to the sound of our partner's noise. Then, after a few minutes, when there is not enough pleasure achieved through the eyes and ears again, we turn on the TV.

If I asked us what we want to do today, or even what our dream life would be like, it would be an attempt at what we think would be the most continually pleasing for the senses. For instance, we would like to see the beach, hear the sound of the waves, or listen to nice music with good food and drink hitting our taste buds. We want tasty food for the tongue, or

healthy food so the body feels good. We would like the chair to be nice and relaxing, and the person beside us to be pleasing to the eyes and ears. Whatever our dream day or dream life includes, it is all immersed in pleasurable sense contact. Without exception, if we look at our entire existence, it revolves around trying to gain more pleasure from the senses and trying to move away from, eliminate, or finding ways to deal with unpleasant things so that they can be more pleasurable. We are completely immersed in the senses, believe in what they show us, and sadly, take them as our refuge.

There are many types of beings in existence that are at different levels regarding sense pleasure. There are even beings in other realms that are not interested in sense pleasure at all. It takes powerful concentration to become aware of such beings. We as humans are right in the middle of the sense pleasure realm. This means that we have approximately an equal amount of pleasure and displeasure. We are oscillating between pleasure and displeasure all the time. We have the opportunity for a lot of both. We can often find ourselves wallowing in displeasure, yet equally often, the senses are titillated and pleasure prevails.





The Animal Realm

Moving down from human realm is the animal realm, which is less pleasurable than that of humans. Animals are trying to gain pleasure from the senses as well. They are in a less enjoyable realm than humans because their existence is threatened more than humans. We humans can sit alone in a daze for three hours in the middle of the day and are usually pretty safe. We may get pick pocketed, though, if we are in a dangerous area! If an animal or insect is sitting in a daze in a forest for three hours, it will die. Something will attack or eat it. Even a larger animal is at risk of being taken down by colonies of ants and poisonous predators.

We can see then, why animals are in a lower plane. They like pleasure, like a tummy rub, tasty food and relaxation, but they spend most of their time alert at the senses so that they can find a meal and not be one. If we are thinking of our dog or cat, they certainly have it better than wild animals. And I know what we may be thinking, but no, they don't have it better than us!



The Lower Realms



Moving downward from the animal realm, we reach spirits or ghosts. They are all looking for sense pleasure, like us. They can be divided into three different levels of experience. Some are lost souls looking for help. Some are greedy. Some are angry and vengeful, thinking they can gain pleasure from causing harm. There are as many types of ghosts and spirits as there are degrees of all the different emotions.

At the lowest realms are the extremely angry beings, which we consider to be on a demonic level, looking to harm and torture. Beings that have this anger and hatred dominating their consciousness, for all intents and purposes, can be considered hell beings of the hell realms. It is not hell as in the image of a burning body with the devil whipping us. This hell is the pain of perpetual negative emotions. It is whatever stories or ideas we project from the perpetual, painful emotions we carry. If we project people beating us, then that torture will be our reality, and we will circle around in it. If there is a lot of anger and fear, then it is very hard to get help. Even a great monk or a light worker who can release spirits into the light, has a hard time with spirits that are so angry and so fearful that they have no humility or compassion. These beings

are not open to receive help, and are unable to find respite from their realm.

Moving upward from there are greed-based entities. The Buddhists call them “hungry ghosts”. They are needy and wanting, all of the time. For such a spirit, greed is dominating the consciousness. We could imagine Ebenezer Scrooge ending up here if he didn’t learn the values of Christmas. They wander around the Earth looking at food, money, sex, or whatever they were addicted to in its previous life. Of course, they are not able to get these sense pleasures. They are not coarse physical beings able to pick up and ingest what they want. So they suffer tremendously, never able to get what they are addicted to. Often these beings are found in bars and places where drugs are heavily used. This realm is slightly more pleasurable than being stuck in anger and hatred. It is not hell, but it sure isn’t heaven!

Moving up from the level of greed is the level of delusion. Such spirits are stubborn, pig-headed ones. No, not literally! They are usually former humans who were so immersed in opinions that after their bodies died, their opinions lived on! They are extremely preoccupied, caught in voicing, explaining, defending and accusing all day long. Things didn’t go their way on earth so in this realm, they are circling around in old stories about people

and situations: “Things shouldn’t be this way. They should be that way.” “It is their fault.” “She ruined everything.” “This is my house.” They are in an egotistical, sometimes self-righteous cycle of suffering, cutting themselves off from other perspectives, family, and perhaps feeling like a victim and afraid to face reality and their own faults.

Many people say that it doesn’t matter what we will be in a future life. We think, “Why should I care if I am not even going to know what I am?” Actually, there are a lot of beings that remember their past lives. In fact, many beings who are in realms lower than us humans remember. Some of them remember very well, so much so that sometimes they don’t even know they died! They are just circling around in the same story over and over again. For example, we may be obsessed about a particular issue, and the same words keep rolling around in our head, like, “That was terrible. Why did they do that to me and ruin my life?” If we have been living our life by this idea or opinion and blaming someone in such a way, then we could end up stuck in this realm, in these opinions, long after the body is gone. We could even be oblivious to the fact that the body is gone, because we don’t spend any time considering anything other than our obsession. The obsession was the prevailing thought or the last thought before we died. This type of spirit is called an

asura gaya in Buddhist terminology. Asuras are not exceedingly angry or sad. They are primarily deluded, caught in their opinions, like a broken record. We all may know some people that are destined for this realm if they don't shape up soon!

If we are familiar with Buddhism, we may know the defilements or the impurities of mind are separated into three main categories: anger, greed and delusion. Roughly, the three lower realms discussed correspond to the three categories of impurities. If we have ever seen or encountered a ghost, it can be classified according to its primary defilement: hatred or anger like hell-beings, greedy and lustful like hungry ghosts, or deluded, oblivious to reality and lost in their own opinions like asuras. These are the main types of lower spirits in existence.



Understanding Cosmology



Cosmology is more than specific lands and destinations, such as earth, heaven and hell. Where a being truly resides is in within a quality of its consciousness. It is likely that troubled beings are with us in this space right now, and beautiful beings are nearby as well. Existing in a particular realm is not a banishment. It is possible for all kinds of interactions between realms, and sometimes there are no interactions. Many attempted interactions take place, and are sometimes unsuccessful. Often, they are too difficult to sense. One realm can appear subtle to another. As humans, we cannot always sense the presence of a heavenly or a hellish being.

When we talk about cosmology, what we are really talking about is the inner experience and the quality of the consciousness of particular beings. Ultimately, the quality of our consciousness is what determines our realm or plane of existence. Humans can feel happy, neutral or unhappy at any particular time. We fluctuate between lower states like anger, greed and delusion, and higher ones like joy and compassion. Humans exist right in the middle of the cosmos in the sense that we can lean either way.



We are not alone. We don't have to look very far to prove other beings exist. Become quiet and see that they are everywhere.

Heavenly Realms

Moving up from the human realm, there are spirit guides and lower level angelic beings. We could say they are of the heavenly realms and interact with other levels. They do not reside in a cloud or behind pearly gates! If we look from the Christian perspective, the heavenly realms are comprised of angels and archangels. An archangel is of a far higher order than an angel.

The truth is, there is more than one heaven. Beings who are faithful to the same teachers, sages and religions, often congregate together and share a beautiful space. They may consider that to be the only heaven, as it is the only one they acknowledge or even see. Heavens have many décors! However, beings basking in the same environment are on different levels of heaven, because they are at different levels of pleasure from the senses, and different levels of consciousness.

Looking at the quality of our consciousness is the most skillful way to understand classification of the realms of existence. Then, when we speak about the

heavens, it corresponds to many levels of consciousness, where we can be at varying degrees of moral, helpful and/or evolved. We can move from a lower level of spirit guide for a particular relative, to a higher order, or higher duty when our consciousness develops more positive qualities.

Buddhist and Hindu cosmology classifies six different levels of heaven. I would say, any classification would not be completely correct, but they give six examples. I have seen many heavens and heavenly beings. Some are hanging out in beautiful places, amusing the senses. Others are here among us, some enjoying wholesome events and people, some helping humanity and some learning to develop their consciousness from great human teachers.

Most religions understand correctly that humans are in the middle, and then there are higher and lower beings. However, we must note that we are in the middle because of the equal amounts of pleasure and pain, not because of our physical location, and certainly not because we are of central importance! Also, most religions only look at this present life and the next one. The truth is, with rebirth, we can go up and down the realms - and we do, and we have, for eons!

Many of us may think that I am finished explaining the realms of existence, and the last topic would be

about God. Of course, many people do not believe in God, and they are usually the same people that do not believe in angels either. That makes sense. If we don't believe in the one, then why believe the others? It is more astute reasoning than the other way around: those that believe in angels, or have experienced angels, then extrapolate that there must be God, and usually just the one. This reasoning is riddled with assumptions. If one experience we have matches to that of a friend, it doesn't mean everything the friend says is true! If our experience corresponds to something in a book, it doesn't mean the whole book is the one and only beacon of truth.

I will say this: some of the heavens I have experienced appear to have a king of that particular heaven. Some do not. If we acknowledge only one of the particular realms of heaven and are oblivious to all the others, then yes, there may only be one way to get there and one god that presides. According to the levels of consciousness, some may classify many gods as higher order angels, or kings of angels. They are very powerful creators, but are still driven by sense pleasure.





Higher than the Heavens

I will now move on to even higher beings. These beings are higher than the most beautiful, compassionate and talented angels and kings of heavens. The reason they are considered higher is because they do not belong to the sensepleasure realms. They attain pleasures that are far more subtle. They are not interested in sights, sounds, scents, tastes and bodily sensations. They do not need to be creative or involved in other worlds to find pleasure. They do not want followers or want to meddle in human affairs. Those are lower forms of pleasure and depend on the outside world.

Higher beings are interested in pleasure from subtle states achieved by powerful concentration. They have reached a level of consciousness where pleasure is drawn from a higher source other than from the eyes, ears, mouth, nose, and body. Thoughts are not required. They do, however, require one object of attention from the physical world to achieve this concentration, like the breath. They watch the breath until all that is left of the world is the breath and some thoughts, and then light, and then sublime peace with no thought. In order to reach this realm, there must have been powerful meditation from past lives. Such a being can live for eons in a state of peace and tranquility away from thought

and from the world. Their realm of existence is called the form realm.

For these beings, concentration becomes so powerful that light appears from the breathing. However, if they enjoy the light, and move toward it, they are trying to gain pleasure from something seen, in this case the light. So they drop back down into the sense pleasure realm that dominates human and heavenly existence.

If they are able to continue to breathe and not get interested in the light, then they can move past the light and past heaven, so to speak. The pleasure is extremely powerful. It is not derived from the outer senses, but from the tremendous stillness. There is also great power available in this stillness, like psychic powers, seeing past lives and seeing the entire universe. They become powerful because they transcend heaven and become a godly deity, above the heavens and Earth. In these realms, beings typically live an extremely long time, in some cases longer than the beginning and the end of a physical universe. If one lives so long then such a being can misinterpret itself as the greatest being; the only god and the sole creator of that universe. A being may err in this way because of its immense power and stillness. In its experience of seeing the birth and death of a universe, it has no recognition of any other being. It may get a rude awakening when its time in this realm is up. It may become interested

in sense pleasure again and be born in a lower realm.

If such beings watch stillness or emptiness and their concentration becomes powerful, they can move into an even higher realm, considered the formless realms. Then, they are in infinite consciousness without bounds or limitations. They can dwell in these realms for eons and eons. Because we are just using the senses to experience the world, there are beings that are far more developed and powerful than we can sense and even imagine. We have to get to a place where we are no longer interested in the senses, even if it is just for a short time, to be able to experience the reality of these beings.

I have limited experience in these formless realms, but enough to know that they really exist and how peaceful they are. If we have just one experience of such tranquility, then even when we are not so tranquil, we may be able to sense the presence of that tranquility nearby, because we have become familiar with it. We have tasted it, so to speak. We can only know what something tastes like, if we have tasted it for ourself.



Finding Our Way Around



There we have the entire cosmology in a nutshell. From the most impure, which is full of anger, to the most pure, where all the defilements and impurities are totally subdued, where form disappears and all that remains is the bliss of emptiness. Then there is everything in between.

The heavens are in between those extremes. They are not the highest realms, but they are the highest of sense pleasure. For example, in the heavens, if we are a higher angel, everyone carries out our work for us. We have a beautiful happy heart, love to do good, and everything comes easily. We live in grand places with beautiful music and can have whatever we desire. It is the highest experience of sense pleasure. In some cases, all higher angels need to do is conjure up an image in their minds of what they want, and immediately other angels provide it for them.

There are so many possible realms that are available to us that already exist, here and now. We do not need rebirth to experience them. Basically every level of generosity, compassion, love, even levels of being joyful, content and involved with positive people, coincides with a heavenly vibration of some kind. And yes, after death, such vibrations within us will likely lead us to a heavenly rebirth. A heavenly rebirth will not include wings and a halo

but could take a similar form to the one we had when we were being generous. We would still be involved in healing, helping others, and continuing our development with great teachers. Whatever it was that led us in to the heavenly realm, be it meditation, mindfulness or prayer, we would continue that work as an angelic being. The difference is, we would experience it with less negative emotions than as a human, and with increased happiness more often. Some of the lower heaven realms are similar to those of human beings but without a lot of the negative emotions. In such realms it is easy for us to do generous and helpful things. We also like being around charitable and kind humans and enjoy attending occasions where humans are doing good deeds.

In the human realm, when we attend virtuous events, talks and high-minded occasions, we can feel good things in the air. Beautiful beings who enjoy congregations of high vibration or lots of light and wholesomeness will join in. This is true across all positive religious and non-religious gatherings. Wherever people are gathered for a good common interest, the angels who share that common interest will join in. In Reiki healing, guides who used to be healers in previous lives continue their healing path from above. Some were great medical and alternative doctors, sound healers, African healers, and Native American shamans. Some were even opera singers who

could release emotional pain from their audiences with their voices. People who practise healing arts like Reiki become channels for these higher levels of healing that are coming through.

Some angels end up as spirit guides for loved ones. If we are a very loving and caring person but we are extremely interested in our family, or are very attached to someone on the Earth plane, then we may be destined for this duty. If we are more powerful, we may be a guardian angel of an entire bloodline, religion or movement. The angelic realms move from spirit guides all the way up to very beautiful sublime states.

Above these angelic realms are the levels of pure concentration, form and formless. These Brahma-lokas as they are called in Buddhism, are comprised of many long living gods or deities who are beyond all sense desire. Some beings are small and remain still and peaceful in holy buildings. Some are as big as the universe itself. These realms are attainable by human beings, usually by practising different types of meditation.

For example, if we practise meditation and make our minds very still and very peaceful, then if we die at that point, with a mind that is very still, that stillness may have the momentum to continue for a long time, far past the physical death. We can be a godly being that is not necessarily involved with the physical Earth,

or involved in creating or doing things, but a being that can exist for eons in this beautiful space of peace. Many such beings are former sages and hermits that lived in the mountains, caves and under trees, and could sustain states of no thought.

Angels are very different from form and formless godly beings as they are still usually involved with thought. They like this, and they do not like that. They would rather be with nice people than people who are not nice, and they still have a sense of identity, knowing who they are. If we have a sense of identity or an idea of our personality, and we have a personal will, then we are still operating in levels of thought.

The gods and deities who have gone beyond sense desire and abide in the form and formless realms use thought at times, but in general they are operating in levels of pure awareness without thought. As I mentioned, it is possible for us humans to come into contact with such beings or eventually become such a being in a future life.

It may sound wonderful to become one of these beings, but as far as the Buddha is concerned, it is a big waste of time. No wisdom is achieved. It is calm and still, and in some cases highly alert, but it is temporary. Upon returning to the sense realms, the cork holding the emotions back is removed, and the struggle continues.

Imagine dealing with ten thousand year old anger!



A Glimpse into the Heavens



I mentioned that the realms are not physical places but varying vibrational states relating the quality of consciousness. As humans, we can experience every one of these states. We can do this firstly as a human being and secondly through direct experience with other beings that are not human but are living and dwelling in these states.

How do we do this? I don't recommend us getting to know beings in the angry, impure states! If we are a Reiki practitioner under the tutelage of a significantly powerful master, we may have encountered lower, or hopefully, higher beings already. If not, we may have been born with gifts from the past that allow these experiences. Many of us have felt or have had an experience of other beings around us. I am not going to teach how to experience lower beings, but I will teach ways to experience higher beings because that can be beneficial. It involves the light. I will discuss the light in more detail

later, but for now here is a short account.

This light is the path toward the heavens, because when we see the light, then we can bring our attention towards it rather than whatever meditation object brought us there, like the breath. Our attention moves away from the breath and towards the light. When we are concentrated on the light, we usually succumb to the light as it is very alluring. It takes us in. Then we can peer into the heavens and have an opportunity to see the lives of higher beings. Sometimes the décor and what they are doing is seen very clearly. It is obvious they are happier and in a more perfect world than us.

Even though we can be near higher beings, we do not join them. We do not get to be one of these beings. We just get to peer in, like checking out what our neighbours are doing in their backyard. Some of these are magnificent places, like in a dream. There are castles and mansions and boaters rowing in unison through pristine waterways. Other heavens are unexplainable, some just an array of patterns of high vibration. These abodes can be witnessed for oneself by achieving a high degree of concentration, and then peering into the light and movement that come to life on the screen of our mind's eye.

The reason we are able to accomplish such things is our energy field has become so powerful from not

being absorbed in thought. As far as higher beings are concerned, thought is a low formation. Humans often assume that thought and reason are what make us higher than other animals. It is true that we may be more developed than animals, but there are beings far above us that consider thought to be something unrefined. In fact, thought is unproductive as far as raising our inner vibration, spiritual progress or true fulfilment are concerned. Humans are so immersed in it, that we do not see that thought uses us, instead of us using it.

There are many uninviting aspects to humanity to which we are largely oblivious. Some levels of heavens believe humans to be so foul smelling and dirty, that they would never want to be near us. Our lack of morality, disrespect for each other and our world, our impatience and pompous, self-righteous opinions, actually emit an appalling odour for them. They see us always worried about our problems, and stuck in pain about why things are not going our way.

Our physical bodies are also revolting to them. We are dirty, bacterial breeding grounds and emit unpleasant odours. Just one day without a shower and even we can detect our own unpleasant smell. We are constantly washing, grooming and adding fragrances to try not to appear as the stinky creatures that we are. We repel many angels in the same way a pig, playing

and defecating in the mud repels us.



Actually, we disgust a lot of higher beings and rightfully so. However, some are still sympathetic and are willing to help and share their light in certain circumstances. They certainly prefer to be around people who are more wholesome and helpful, who wish to heal and be healed, and who have more compassion. Such humans actually “smell” better to angels when there is a purity of heart. They are more approachable so the angels are more willing to be around them. They are not interested in being around people who are extremely selfish and filled with anger. These people are not vibrating at the right brightness to be surrounded by angels. If we want to experience angels or have more angels around us, let us raise the bar within ourself. Let us become more helpful, kind, and generous. We will promote a higher energy field and attract more angels.

Using the breath is the most powerful way to achieve higher states or qualities of consciousness and attract angels and guides. I will share more about this when we discuss the light. With our hectic lifestyles, it is harder in modern times to become enamoured with the breath to the point where we are able to achieve the light. We would need long retreats and continued meditation for a couple of hours each day for a few weeks, at least. I highly recommend breath meditation, as

it is useful for so many spiritual purposes.

Is spending time with the breath as much as possible for a few weeks, and then for a while every day, too much work? Consider how much time we spend entertaining ourselves, with our minds immersed in device screens throughout the day, and immersed in our aimless dreams at night. The breath eventually becomes far more entertaining than any of these things when concentration sets in. It can take us on a journey through the light, the cosmos and all of its beings, and bring us answers to life's biggest questions.





How can we know for sure that what we see is really an angel and not just our imagination?



We are right to not trust what we see. This holds true for all vision, not just the inner variety! Even the eyes deceive us and show only a perspective of what is really in front of us.

What really exists, is energy. The angels are energy fields and so are we, though their fields are brighter and nicer than we are - for now!

In order to be sure your experience of an angel is genuine, we need to become more sensitive to subtle energies. You may want to ask yourself these questions:

Have you ever been in a room and felt that bad things have happened there before, or that there is still stress in the air?

Have you ever visited a holy place and could feel its sacredness in your energy field?



Have you ever been in a natural setting, virtually untouched by humans and could sense the peace and harmony through your body?

Have you ever sat in a waiting room next to a quiet stranger and felt his anxiety radiating towards you?

Have you ever had a friend who was keeping a straight face and a secret about her pregnancy, but you could feel she was bursting inside with joy?

Once we feel the energy of others and the environment, independent of thought, then we can get a sense of their energy fields, and of things that we cannot see with our eyes. When a vision appears of an angel, it should be accompanied by a happy, wholesome energy field. If a godly presence appears, there will be a subtle, serene energy that comes along with it. The real ones usually appear out of nowhere and pierce through whatever thoughts we were immersed in. When the visions are not genuine, they usually come in a sleepy daze!





“

*Religions speak the truth of the clouds they
rest on while unaware of the open sky.*

”

Chapter 2



Souls, God and Religion

Now that we have discussed all the beings one may come across as we travel the realms of existence, I would like to share some higher knowledge regarding the nature of individual souls, god nature and fascinating ways the two are related. Allow me to remind us to keep an open mind, as much of what is relayed here will be a new understanding.



Souls



I will start by mentioning that we each experience ourself as an individual. Although we may have read or subscribed to the notion that we are not a separate individual, that we are all one and the idea of being an individual is a delusion, being an individual is our experience. We may be surprised to hear that a feeling of individuality is also the experience of angels and gods. There is still a sense of individuality in their consciousness. Even if it's a huge state of consciousness that encompasses all beings and things, like that of some gods, which I discuss shortly, it still carries a sense of self within it. If there is any self at all, even a subtle sense of self or a redefined, all encompassing one, we are still subject to samsara. Samsara is a word in Sanskrit, meaning the endless cycle of birth and death.

If we are still existing in samsara, then we are living under the delusion that there are separate souls. If we've reached a very high state, however, like a godly state, we may see that our soul encompasses all other souls. This is true from a certain experience, but we all still have a sense of individuality and an individual soul.

It is true that we have an individual soul or consciousness (I prefer the word consciousness) that is developing but it is not the truth at the highest level. At the highest level, we see that we are misunderstanding. Even that part of us that feels like a soul is actually not permanent itself. It's flickering in and out of existence. From moment to moment, a new consciousness is reborn. It has no identity.

At the end, we wash away all identity. However, it is helpful to admit that we see it as a separate consciousness until we don't see it as a separate consciousness anymore, until we have washed that misunderstanding away in our direct experience. For now, we haven't washed that away and from this intermediate level of truth, we see ourselves and others as separate consciousnesses or souls. Even within this life, we are blinking in and out of existence and recreating a self in every moment. This flickering happens so fast that it feels like a smooth and continuous experience, as one long living consciousness.

Then this consciousness is reborn from one life to another life, from one being to another being. It appears that we've changed forms along a huge chain or succession of births and deaths. We are not only reborn as human beings, but we can move up and down the chain very, very high and very, very low. Many

religions touch on portions of this and consider it the whole truth. What they talk about, like heaven and hell, is actually true, insofar as it is a part of the truth.

The truth is we can exist in heaven or hell for so long that we think it is eternity, but it is not eternity. That's a simplification. Sometimes, it's a helpful simplification, depending on who we are talking to, to say that we are in this life now and in the next lifetime we will go to hell or heaven. In a sense it could be true. This life is just one small life in a huge succession of lives. It's one small segment of a long chain of causes and effects with each life being just a single link. Our next life could be in a heaven or hell. This is dependent on what we've put into motion already, primarily regarding the quality of our consciousness and our habits.

If we do evil things, creating pain for others, and we find joy in and rejoice in their suffering, that's what demons do. Our consciousness will have no choice but to be demonic in our next life. It has built that habit. If we have been well trained in lying, stealing, harming and cheating, then we will be heading down to the lower realms. If we are well established in fearing, worrying, feeling lonely, and isolating ourself in negative feelings and fears, then most likely we will end up as a lonely ghost that can't find its way. If we are very

busy in opinions, and feel we are right and others are wrong, that this person should be this way and that other person should be that way, and if we have an “I know everything” type of personality, then we may not have a physical body but will become a ghost that’s trapped and caught in an opinion for ages and ages. On the other hand, if our consciousness is opinionated but also nice, helpful and moral, then we may be a human being in the next life with a mix of both good and bad. If we are very helpful, generous, rejoicing in wholesome things like people praying, helping each other and healing each other, then we are probably destined to be an angel in one of the many levels of heavens. For some of us who are addicted to, or very good at going into deep, still meditative states, we are likely to be reborn as a godly being of some size and for some duration. Perhaps, we will be huge and powerful, or maybe just small and still.

From all of these levels, once our steam runs out, we move on to another level. We could have been a demonic being going about our evil business, and then all of the sudden the well of evil runs dry. We become tired of it or remember some goodness within us from the past and want a change. Perhaps if we see an angel or lightworker at that time when we have opened our heart somewhat, we will decide to enter the light for

a rebirth. We may make it up to a human or heavenly realm, or perhaps we may become a cat.

Animals have souls or consciousness as well. Some have been human beings. We may sense that in our cats and dogs at times. Some may have been angels but then had to drop down because of negative things they did in the past, in heaven, or because of something lower that is stuck in their consciousness. We are all moving around and around like this, as a separate self.



Ego and Religion



Anything that we believe is driven by ego. When I say ego, I don't mean an inflated one, but just that simple sense of identity or conceptually concocted self-image. We are looking for an identity through our particular experience and we want to feel special, or at minimum, feel distinct from others.

It is no wonder many proclaim their experience as the one that everyone should shoot for, or the one that has all the answers for humanity. I'm directing this teaching at all of us of course, but we can extrapolate and see that this is what a lot of individuals, channels,

and entire faiths have done in the past. They have proclaimed their religion to be the correct one. They have jumped to conclusions in thought, based on their powerful, yet limited or narrow spiritual experiences. It is the same as someone loving a restaurant and proclaiming it the best and that everyone should love it. The one boasting may have only tried two things on the menu, and then extrapolates that everything there is the best, hands down! We can roll our eyes at such people when they are talking about their favourite food or rock band, but it can be intense when these people have influence and strong religious beliefs.

Many sages, prophets and saviours are coming from very profound experiences and inner experiences. Some of these are permanent breakthroughs, we could say. These experiences remain in their hearts for the rest of their lifetimes, or can be recreated at will as a stable fixture in their lives. They then take this experience of truth to be the whole truth. When the ego takes this experience as the whole truth, we then cut people and other religions out of our heart. We block ourselves from the whole truth. We become segmented. We only see part of the truth and believe it is the whole truth. That's where danger comes in, even though we don't intend it as such. With ego, we have separation, and with separation comes disagreement, conflict and

violence.

Sometimes, the ego is very subtle. Some famous teachers can't see that they still have a sense of self floating around. Many are aware that they are not their thoughts and body, yet, they hold to emptiness or consciousness as who they are instead. If there is any holding to or moving in and out of a preferable state, then the sense of self has not yet been washed away. These people are usually very peaceful and will likely end up as gods when they move on to their next life.

Gods



If there is a god, and it knows itself to be the one and only god, then it is mistaken.

As far as I've been able to see in my personal meditation and experience, all the gods that are worshipped in the major religions actually exist. They are not the same god. They are different gods. There is more than one god.

Some godly beings are also egoic and have preferences and demands. They are powerful and wonderful, and if we respect them, they may help us

significantly on our path. Some of them are biased toward their own experiences and beliefs. Some prefer to be worshiped and respected. Some are uninterested in these things. All of the gods have their own personal experience and have a past. They have a certain set of beliefs and understandings within themselves.

A god wasn't always a god. A god accumulated a set of abilities, of perfections, when it wasn't yet a god. Usually, one of these abilities is to make its mind very still. When the mind becomes very still it becomes extremely powerful. When it is extremely still for a very, very long time, whatever lifetimes it had before that disappear from memory. Whatever form or energy field it had in the past, whether it was a physical one or not, subsides.

When I say very long, I don't mean thousands or even millions of years. I mean, a countless number of years. Galaxies are born and die within this time. This number is beyond what human beings can comprehend. We can have no concept of the length of this existence. In Indian scriptures, the term for it is asanka kappa, a type of aeon that isn't even conceptually understandable. This being has been around for so unimaginably long and its mind is so unbelievably present, that there appears to be no time, no light and no other beings in its existence. There appears to be no experience other than itself.

Even from this place, a god's perfections start to lose momentum, and thought and desire for more experiences return. They create light. When I say they create light, it sounds like they have done something wonderful, and they have, but actually from the highest perspective, their concentration was disturbed. They move into a period where they now want more, but they haven't decided this out of their free will. What's happened is the perfection of their meditation has lost steam, and they now move to where they are a little bored, or feel that they require something more.

For eons they required nothing. Now they require something. They have moved down a step in a sense. Such a supreme being is still very skilled at going back into the experience of the nothingness again, at least at first. It starts losing steam and wants to create, so it puts some things in motion. There is light, and forms begin to appear in its consciousness as is its will.

From this being's perspective, it is the creator and ruler of the universe. It is a god, because it has been around so unfathomably long, and can't remember any time before. It was so present and there was nothing other than its infinite experience. It mistakes itself as the one and only being. Everything that occurred after it were things that were born to it, within its one and only experience. It appears as creation itself.

Things created by universal law are like adopted children to it. Everything appears to have happened within its infinite consciousness, so it considers itself the father and mother of everything.

In some cases, these beings have infinite love, like the infinite love of the father and mother of all creation. Through experience, I have a sense of some of these gods. They are worthy and wonderful beings to respect and worship. When I see someone get on their knees and pray every day to a god, I smile. It is beautiful. It is one beautiful segment of the entire truth. It is helpful to us to pray and have respect and love for such beings.

If we have a conviction that there is only one god, then we are cutting ourselves off from the entire scope of truth. When we are cutting ourselves off from the greater truth and asserting that there is only one god, only “my” god, we may sense that there is pain and hope in saying that. That is, we sense a fear we will lose our identity if we open ourselves up to other possibilities. Perhaps we fear our god will be displeased if we doubt its authority. We also may have a feeling that we hope what we believe is true. Hope signals uncertainty. If we hope that something is real, we aren’t sure that it is. If we want to say there is only one god, we are stretching the truth. Or, perhaps I should say,

we are shrinking it.

My late grandfather often joked, “Man created God, then God created man!” Now that I have done my research, I would say, “Man believed a god was God, then God created man!”



Channels for Gods



Some of the saviours, prophets and higher beings on the Earth are channels for powerful gods. Some of them fully encapsulate the power and teachings of their gods. Some of them are only able to channel partially as their own thoughts distort it somewhat. Some of these beings that are able to do such things exist today. Very few of them are revered by us as saviours because our minds these days have so much information. We have many distractions and explanations for how things come about in our world. We would hardly recognize a saviour as a saviour or a being that embodies a god as a being who channels a god, even if that being was right in front of us. For example, it would be hard in this day and age for us to say that a particular being alive today is equivalent to Jesus.

There are many examples of beings that are avatars and embody extremely high and powerful beings here on Earth. Some of the avatars are known because they are famous teachers within particular religions. Some of the avatars have only a small following. A powerful and famous example alive today is Amma. She channels the energy and teachings of a god in the fullest capacity. She is a teacher within Hindu traditions. There is a powerful and great Hindu god, Lord Shiva, who is very active today. Amma works both with him and the female side of him.

Some heavenly beings are more active than others. Some have a desire to help and to love. Many beings still prefer to be deep in their own experience of peace and aren't as active. Others were formless gods in stillness, but eventually the stillness ended. They were not able to achieve their infinite consciousness anymore. Now they are similar to larger angels but still dedicate their existence to service from a higher place. Some angels are able to separate themselves out into many places and do many things at the same time.

Take for example a coma situation. Some people have reported leaving their bodies and being able to experience different things. They could hear many conversations or be in several places all at the same time.

I don't mean to belittle that experience because it is an amazing and life-changing one, for sure, but it is not as rare as one might think. Many angels experience life in this way, where they are still intensely involved in the world and are able to see many things at the same time. In fact, some are able to help many situations at the same time. Many of the deities that work with me are simultaneously in many other places. Let's not think we are so special when we sense an archangel or Hindu god, that it has cancelled all other appointments and chosen to be with us alone!

There are numerous examples of open souls who channel a higher being and have profound experiences. Then, sometimes the ego takes just one extra step, makes a conclusion and proclaims itself as the only being worthy of worship. In some cases, the channel is totally open and there is no mistake in interpretation; it is the god that is mistaken. The god itself truly believes it is the only being of its kind.

Let's not deny any god, any religion or definition of god. Let's also not deny the power of scientific discovery. It has given us practical ways to help us survive, be comfortable, have neat gadgets, look for more life on this planet and perhaps on other planets. Science is a very helpful part of our truth system, and we can include it in there with religion. Of course it is dangerous

when there aren't any ethics in science. It is also dangerous when there aren't any ethics in religion, like in extremism or when a religion is believed so blindly that it denies what science has seen to be true, like climate change or even how old the Earth is.



Redefining God



A lot of atheists and logical people, cleverly redefine god not as a being, but as infinite consciousness itself, as nature as a whole, or as universal law. They feel better about this, that at least they found room for the word *god* in their lives. Some religious people start to doubt the idea of an almighty being in the sky, and sects break out, redefining god. In most of these cases, god is no longer a being but now includes all life. I enjoy teachings that say that we are all of god essence or Buddha nature.

As far as defining God, we should recognize the existence of both the states of consciousness of gods and the beings that reside in each state of consciousness. There are many gods and some of them have an infinite consciousness. When people define god as something that permeates through all of us, they are really referring to the “state” and not the particular being. Let’s say that there is a oneness, and not call it God. There are some new age religions that accept God as either the light or the emptiness that permeates through all beings and the universe. If we feel the need to have a one and only God, this would then include all the popular gods as part of God. This one and only God is a state of consciousness, an achievable mental state which could be described as oneness.

It gets very confusing, I know. Perhaps the best and most helpful thing is to simply acknowledge that we don't understand, and be comfortable with that. We could be comfortable not having to make an identity or not having to make a "one god". We can be content to believe that the god or gods we worship can attain this God consciousness and thus is one with everything, and even one with all other gods. To paint a picture, it is like all the gods are separate beings but each individual consciousness is so vast that they are all superimposed over top of one another.



Experiencing Gods and God States



What I'm able to tell us is that we, as meditators, have the experience of godliness available to us. When we have these experiences and we are able to have them often enough for sustained periods, we are practising to be a god ourselves. A god may appear to be a colossal being but in the entire vastness of the universe, it is not necessarily that big. It's only bigger than one galaxy, out of trillions of galaxies. However, for us humans, it is ridiculously huge and powerful.

In meditation, we may be able to have the experience of feeling infinite, as boundless as the entire universe. We may also be able to have the experience of feeling infinitely nothing, where there isn't even an expanse, just consciousness itself, a consciousness that has dropped out of any worldly experience or having any sense of size or time. A consciousness such as this has separated out from the entirety of mental and physical experience.

In some of these experiences, we are practising to be a god of a certain kind. We are not practising to be an angel, but an actual god of the formless realms. In a future life, far down the road, we may become one of these beings that dwells in infinite consciousness or infinite space, until that experience starts to lose momentum. Then, we may begin creating again from our mental images. We may become mistaken and believe that everything was created in our belly. After all, our experience is one where we encapsulate all of existence. As we lose steam and come back to the world of physicality, time and separate beings, there may be this appearance of creation.



Stuck in Samsara



As we achieve higher states in this world, whether it be sublime levels of meditation, seeing angelic or godly realms; whether it be achieving psychic powers like clairvoyance, clairsaudience or the divine eye, or even the ability to be in many places at one time like these brilliant angels, it is all happening in samsara, the cycle of birth and death. No state can persist; not even a godly one.

Gods are able to sustain wonderful states for eons, but then their power loses momentum and they must fall from grace. Movement occurs through the levels of rebirth. There may be a movement back to angel, back to human, maybe even back to animal or ghostly being; moving back up and back down, through unfathomably long periods of time. We are all still in the prison of samsara, even as we develop our heart to connect with all spiritual beings and the great powers imaginable.

In some realms, we are able to get help from powerful beings or even humans. Some spirits could be called “lost souls”. They were human beings and died too scared or pig-headed to move higher. They need our help. Some religions are helpful and bring these souls to higher places without even knowing that they

are. Sometimes, all it requires to help one of these lost souls is to do something pleasing for them or on their behalf. Amid all their pain and suffering, if they are able to see someone is showing them care or honouring them in some way, and then they are able to appreciate it deeply, they can move higher. Without assistance, it is difficult for ghosts to feel genuine appreciation. Their negative states of consciousness must be sustained to stay where they are. As soon as they feel wonderful, like when they sense good things are being done on their behalf, they are immediately reborn to higher states with higher levels of consciousness.

Many religions are not presently aware of this fact. Perhaps some of the earlier priests of certain religions knew this, because the ceremonies in these faiths often lend themselves to helping lost souls. I have been to funerals where during the eulogies or other rituals, the soul moved on, unbeknownst to the congregation.

I was at a Jewish funeral and the congregation had recited a final prayer of appreciation for the deceased. They said they were rejoicing in the love and caring for him. Everyone said “amen” and when the Rabbi said “amen” there was a feeling of relief and a light that came over the entire crowd. I don’t believe the Rabbi even knew this was happening, but the sense was that the deceased enjoyed the ceremony, opened his

heart and then moved on. Doing such things for beings that are lost or suffering is very helpful. Some people create a charity in a late loved one's name, or donate money and have a plaque mounted in a religious venue. If people have lots of money, they may dedicate a wing of a hospital in their loved one's name or erect a statue of honour. I have even seen a facebook page created to celebrate someone's life. Anything positive that we do for the departed after their death can help, if they haven't already moved on to a higher consciousness. If they have already moved up it's possible they could move to something even higher, if they haven't yet been reborn as a human being or animal. If they have already become a human or animal, they do not have the ability to be aware of the nice things we do.

I mention my appreciation for many different religious ceremonies because of how helpful they can be. They often feel pointless to the attendees, who may be too upset, or too involved in custom and not really seeing the grand scheme of things. Sometimes the leaders are being egoic and separatist, believing that what they are doing is the right thing and what others are doing isn't. Yet, at a higher level there are important things going on for our consciousness or soul when there is love and appreciation involved. Funerals honouring the deceased are very important, and not just for the living.

Religions



From my experience, I can say that every religion speaks the truth. They are all true to a certain extent, however, none of them paint a full picture of everything that is going on. We can't blame them for this because there is far more going on than any human mind can tackle, especially modern human minds like ours, which are immersed in thought ninety-nine percent of the time.

To start to understand the truths about religions, their gods and angels, we must be able to spend significant periods of time out of thought. Even if we have a moment or two here and there out of thought, we may be able to sense any beings that are with us, sending their light and love right now. For example, Archangel Michael is a very powerful and helpful being that is by far one of the most active assistants that exists today. He is one of the most wonderful and busiest deities alive. Some sense that Archangel Michael is helping them. Perhaps even while reading this book, and speaking his name, we will invoke his presence.

We may even get a picture of him in our mind from time to time, or observe flashes of light blue lines of dust as he and his angelic followers fly through. We only get momentary experiences because our thoughts

come in and cloud them so quickly. When thought comes back in, we have left the experience. At that point, we may begin making assumptions, like Archangel Michael is a Christian being. We may then come to a conclusion that Christianity or Catholicism is correct and thus everything said about Jesus is true! When the thoughts jump to conclusions, we don't get a whole picture of what's going on. In fact, when we think we are accepting a higher reality, we are actually cutting ourselves off from an even higher one. This can be very dangerous.

All religions have portions of truth in their teachings and their belief in, worship and respect of certain beings. However, if we only have experiences with certain beings or one specific being, then we may make the conclusion that this experience is the only truth or the highest truth. We may think that because this being is with us, that it is the only one deserving of our faith. It can be a nice experience to be protected by a deity, but if we make any definitive conclusions based on these experiences we are cutting ourselves off from many other possibilities.

I don't want to exalt a theological religion above any other. It would be nice if no one did. The gods are all equally splendid. There is an aspect of the Hindu religion, however, that I very much appreciate: it paints

a bigger picture than most. It's not truer, but it takes a broader perspective on cosmology. It sees that there are many, many gods that exist for very, very long. It sees that there are a multitude of levels of heaven instead of just one. It doesn't zero in on just one.

The religions that zero in on particular heavens or particular beings, are just as true, in that those beings do exist and it is wonderful to worship them and receive their blessings. We can also zoom out. Hinduism zooms out and sees many gods. Even the Buddha is involved in Hindu cosmology. They respect the Buddha as a being. Some of them mistake the Buddha for a god. He wasn't a god. He was a human who found the way to wash away all pain from his consciousness, which is quite different. Some Hindus recognize him as a great teacher. They don't follow his teachings in particular, but they praise him. They have a very big cosmology and most beings are welcome in it.

Their ancient cosmology predates Christianity; therefore, the Christian God, Jesus and the Christian angels aren't part of it. Even so, if we speak to religious Hindus, we will find that they don't deny the existence of Christian angels or Christian areas in the heavens. They don't have any resistance to it. In Hindu friends and students of mine, there is an extreme openness to all deities, those within and outside of

their religion. This attitude is commendable and highly recommended.



Some religions have nice subdivisions within their religion. For example, Kabbalah in Judaism and Sufism in Islam. These sects that happen occur within the religion and then seem to zoom out and radiate a broader perspective of truth for a lot of people, more so than the traditional religion they came from. There seems to be a deeper meaning there. It is nice that these religions were able to adopt these teachings. Many of these teachings claim to predate the religions through which they flourished. For me, whether that is true or not is irrelevant. We follow what works to bring more wholesome states, including tolerance, understanding, compassion and mindfulness, until it doesn't work anymore. It is encouraging to see that some religions accept these later understandings as part of their faith because many of these newer age sects zoom out and show more of what is available.

After the Buddha's death, Buddhism went in many different directions. For some it became just another arena to worship more gods and idols. For some it became an arena to practise meditation to attain different abilities and experiences. None of this is what the Buddha taught. The Buddha warned of the dangers in taking higher beings or higher states as our refuge. Not listening to

his advice, we cycle endlessly through samsara.



In a sense, Buddha taught the way out of religion. There aren't many people who become interested in, or understand what the Buddha was actually pointing to. Of the many falsehoods that have made their way into Buddhism over the years, there is one very special aspect of Buddha's teachings that remains unstained and preserved. It is the Buddha's teachings on the way to start washing away all the pain from the heart. It is the way to freedom from all suffering and freedom from all realms. It is not just about creating good karma; it is the end of all karma, all suffering, all realms and samsara.





*Wow! I've never heard anything like this before.
Were you always able to feel the presence of Gods?
How do you sense them?*



I used to be a skeptic. How wrong I was! Now it's the opposite, because I see just about everything to exist. That's why in some of my talks about gods, I encourage people to see that all religions are valuable as long as they are not looking to harm anyone. There are some that believe doing harm can provide favourable outcomes in the afterlife. That is absolutely wrong. Love and respect for higher beings, however, is a wonderful thing. There are so many of them. It is interesting to feel the textures, vibrations and nuances of the love, power, wisdom, size, openness, and stillness of the respective consciousnesses of the gods. They are so wonderful to experience. Occasionally I get to experience new ones. For example, I had made a connection with some Hindu deities, and more recently I made a connection with Lord Ganesh, a joyous and helpful being.





I've heard it said that sometimes family or friends share lifetimes as souls or soul groups or clusters of souls. Can you talk about that?

Not only have we traveled with family and friends but also with some of our teachers. It is not a coincidence we are reading this book or listening now. In some cases we resonate with a teacher until we go as far as he or she can take us, and then we move on. In other cases, we just get distracted or pulled astray by impurities for a while, only to reconnect with our teacher once again.

As souls, we travel from one life to the next. We often do so in groups. I am sure a lot of us have heard of soul groups who travel together. What is more interesting is why we travel together. The reason we travel in groups is because of our attachment to those groups. Invested in these attachments are patterns we haven't broken free from. The attachment or patterns may be a result of a tremendous amount of love or hate for each other. There is unfinished business. There may be lessons to learn, like forgiveness. There may be









grudges we have been carrying that are so strong that we have to meet this person again to break the painful bond through forgiveness. We can progress and remove this negative imprint from our consciousness.

If there's a strong emotional bond, we have been connected before. It's an energetic attraction. We find them and they find us because the connection is so strong. We are reborn into similar situations again and again if we don't grow and move past them. If we don't learn, usually the situations become more painful and difficult each time. Finally, it gets to the point where we are forced to work on it or we can't breathe anymore. Let's try to learn the lessons quickly so we can move on and not suffer unnecessarily.



For anyone withholding forgiveness and holding onto grudges, I highly recommend releasing them. We may need to spend a few days alone in our own pain, space and time to allow for healing. When we are holding pain, we move our pain outward to the present situation and think that it is the problem, but really the problem is we are holding







the pain inside. The pain taints our interpretation of our environment, which often comes from stains on our consciousness. The stains come primarily from issues with people in this life and past lives. Sometimes we travel together because there is a tremendous love connection and at times, it is a connection where difficulties need to be worked through. In this life, we have another opportunity to learn what it is we have to know. So let's learn it and break free!

Not only do we travel with humans, but we travel with pets as well. The pet could be reborn as a human and we can end up friends. It is not just family members who remain family members, and certainly not in the same roles. One time we may be the child, then another time we may be the friend, or the lover, or the parent. Relationships can switch around from one lifetime to the next. In fact our mother or father may have been our wife or husband, especially if we had the same kind of interaction before. Have you ever felt that your child is like your parent, your dog is your best friend, or your good friend is your sister?







It's an energetic attraction. We find them and they find us because the connection is so strong.

I used to feel a connection with my religion, maybe because of my parents' influence. Now I feel less religious, but more spiritual. Does that make sense?

We think that religion comes through our blood and our ancestors. This is what our parents learned and what the world drills into us. Most of us have been human beings time and time again, traveling through a multitude of religions and cultures. Our consciousness is far more attached to religions and gods that were meaningful for us previously, rather than the blood of our ancestors in this life. We could be mistaken about our lineage. Try not to struggle with this issue too much and just be honest with yourself. Why would we have an affinity to maintaining customs our great grandparents held? If we have never met them, our tech support guy has a better chance of being on the fringes of our soul group than they do. However, if those who raised us are part of our soul group in a positive way,







then our soul group and family lineages may collide. In some cases, we may have been connected with a particular religion for the last couple of lifetimes, and have respect for it, but are exploring away from it now to open the heart further. That is a respectful place to be.

How can we understand people who don't feel like they belong here and are longing to go home?

The saddest cases are those who ended up here but had a major affinity to other realms. They feel so strange as a human being. They usually can't remember where they belong. In some cases, they are born with severe psychological and social disorders, and some develop them later. It is very sad. A lot of the people in mental institutions had a real stroke of bad karma and don't belong here as humans but unfortunately have to bear it for a short time.

A lot of people that were in the heaven realms before and then came down to the Earth to be healers did so because they have learning





and pain to experience that they couldn't experience in heaven. That may resonate for some of us. They come to the Earth yet feel a strong affinity to the other levels. They may feel lonely here, but had to leave their previous realm for a reason. They may not find a life partner in this earthly realm because it may be difficult to find someone who vibrates at the level they need. Also, it is very hard for them to relate to human beings, as they only want to be around those who carry a current of energy from another realm as well.

Some humans are fresh out of animal realms. I am sure some of us have an idea of who these people are in our life! If they continue to act as an animal, without any display of morality, sympathy or other basic human qualities, then they will shoot back to the animal realm soon enough.



“

*Karma is so important to understand
because it governs our every action.*

In fact, it is our every action.

”



Chapter 3

Karma

I feel it is important to talk about how karma is affecting our lives. In most of the world, karma has been reduced to a fun idea and the word has lost its true meaning. Its significance is rarely considered or given credence in the popular religions and scientific forums. I don't think I am overstating it when I say that it is a travesty that we overlook karma. It is the force that drives our lives and is absolutely essential to understand. Most of what we learn, even the most ground-breaking discoveries in math and sciences, are completely nonessential in comparison. If we acknowledge the existence of karma and understand it better, we can improve this life and this world dramatically, and of course, improve our future lifetimes too.

We've all existed for much, much longer than this lifetime. This isn't our first life. A number of people have had some past life experiences that have helped them see and understand this. There are children all over the world that talk about when they were old, and then their information is verified. Some kids have even found their previous murderers. In fact, there is so much

evidence of this and even rigorous scholarly research conducted on it, that it is hard to believe it hasn't become the accepted worldview.

We have a succession of lifetimes, one right after the other. Where we end up in our next life is significantly determined by our actions in this one. When I speak of a life, I don't mean only as a human being. We may roam around without a body or be in a heavenly realm for a while and then return to humanity. Not only human lifetimes are counted. Being a ghost of your former self for a while is considered a new life as well. In other realms, there is a lifespan, with a start, a karmic journey and an end, just like a human life.

Many people say that we are here to learn and grow. This is true. If we don't learn and grow, we circle back and keep repeating the same mistakes, in negative spirals of similar patterns. For example, if we don't break bonds with people with whom bonds need to be broken, then the karmic ties are continued in future lives. We will end up encountering the same minds or consciousnesses dressed in different bodies and we will revolve around in similar problematic situations with them. A scary thing is, if we don't learn our lesson, the situations may have to escalate and become severe until we finally do.



The Quality of Our Heart



What is highly valued in the East and not considered as much in the West is how the quality of our minds and hearts in this lifetime plays a substantial role in the quality of our future lives. It is unfortunate that we don't consider this in the West. Modern civilization lacks a proper understanding of the way things really work, and the consequences are devastating to our collective psyche. All it really takes to set things right is to pay attention.

For example, we may notice that when we give charity, it unfailingly makes us feel good. When we are worrying about how much money to give or how much we can spare, we feel uneasy. However, when we do give, there is a beautiful feeling that arises. There is a higher quality and open heart that shows itself for a while. Whether we are giving charity, doing volunteer work or helping our community, there is a wonderful feeling. When we are concerned about our finances or are stingy with our time and energy, and hold back from an opportunity to help, we feel restricted, guilty, or lacking. Just from this simple experiment, we can sense in our own experience what type of karma we are creating with these two opposing vibrations that we are sending into the world.

We may notice when we perform acts of charity or kindness, that something positive happens to us afterwards. Charity is an action that works very quickly to bring us positive vibes. These vibes attract good things to us. Next time we do something helpful like charity, let's keep our eyes open and we will see that in the days that follow, something good will surely come back to us.

Some people describe karma like Newton's first law of physics: Each force has an equal and opposite force. Similarly, one of the Buddhist beliefs teaches that from whatever we give, we get back manyfold. The Buddhist version is still equal and opposite because once we give, the act of giving in turn creates more positive energy in the positive direction. It is understood that about three times - and some say ten times - of what we give comes back to us. Giving is a wonderful opening for positive karma in this life time and in future lifetimes as well. Generosity is considered one of the qualities one must perfect to become a Buddha one day.

When I say future lifetimes, please don't misunderstand. I don't only mean lifetimes as a human being. Remember, we don't always come back as a human being. There are many different beings we can rebirth as, and there are many different types of beings that we have almost certainly been already. This all depends

on our actions in past lives. If we want to know what types of beings we could be, I would answer any type of being. Anything that is out there is a possibility.

I used to be a skeptic about this until I started getting better at meditation on certain levels. I was a realist but remaining a skeptic became impossible because of what was apparent in my own experience. I couldn't deny the existence of beings ranging from the lowest, most angry and vengeful in nature, all the way up to the most beautiful and sublime ones. There are beings that live for a just a split second, and some that last for eons and eons.

All of this is possible for us. It depends entirely on the type of mind we develop in this life. Are we perpetually immoral, adding to negativity, finding more things to be angry, sad or vengeful about? Alternatively, are we learning to be more virtuous, positive, helpful and caring? Are we busying our mind with more and more stories and concerns, or are we becoming tranquil and free of idle inner chatter?

Where will we go next? It could be anywhere. The answer lies within the quality of our heart and deeds. What habits are growing in our heart and what are we letting go of? The Buddha mentions that if we are to have the right effort in our spiritual development, then we must not add any evils to our mind. It is better to

rid ourself of the evils that are there now, cultivate new wholesome qualities and grow the ones that are already there.



It is impossible to do something positive that doesn't reap a positive result.

Karma = Action



Karma simply means action. There's effectively no difference between the word *karma* and the word *action*. We generally don't use the word correctly. Technically, instead of saying someone has good or bad karma, we should say that they are experiencing good or bad karmic results, which are the results of their actions.

In the West, the word has become rather generic. When we say someone has good karma usually we mean they have a nice energy to them, or that they are experiencing good luck or a good fate. I suppose fate is closer to the truth, but the fate that is being experienced is no accident. It is driven by the actions we, ourself, have performed. Each action that we have performed is called karma.

More specifically, the laws of karma apply to volitional action. This means that there has to be will in the action, that the action has intention. Very little negative result will occur from a karma that is completely unintentional. The effects come about when it is something that we do on purpose, or something that we have the ability not to do, but we do it anyway.

This applies to both good and bad actions. We may have the opportunity to do something nice for someone and we don't do it. That's a volitional action, where we decided not to do something. In another case, we may have the possibility of doing something nice for someone and we decide to do it. That's another volitional action: the act of doing this nice thing for someone. The karma aspect is the action itself. Karma is the action. Any action that we do is either good, bad or slightly good or slightly bad. There are things that are neutral but even in neutrality they are usually a tiny bit bad or a tiny bit good. For all intents and purposes, karma is any action we will ever perform.

As an aside here, there is only one type of being that does no more volitional action. Their actions are karmic result-free. These are fully enlightened beings, called arahants. There are arahants that exist today, albeit a precious few, and some teach how to be free of karma and rebirth. My teacher in Thailand is one

such teacher, although he would never say that he is. His complete purity and unmovable peace can be seen by some of us with the ability to peer into others' hearts.



Karmic Results

It is the action that is karma, not the result. For example, we may hunt and kill an animal. Then later in life, we get bitten by an animal or fall ill from the swine flu or mad cow disease. Someone might say it is our karma. They may be correct, though it is often our past karma that is inducing the present consequences. It may be more correct to say, "It is the result of your karma."

It is hard to know which results are related to which actions. In fact, it is impossible to know all the details. There is one thing we can be sure of: if something negative happens to us, we have committed negative actions in the past. It works pretty much like Newton's law of physics that every action has an equal and opposite reaction. There is nothing magical or mystical about this.

The reason it appears mystical is because we are operating in the world of three or four dimensions. We

live in three dimensional space and it looks as if we are moving through time, which is the fourth dimension. We only perceive the world in these four dimensions, so karma appears mystical. It is not mystical; it is an equal and opposite reaction occurring. It's not obvious to us how the equal and opposite reaction is occurring and what it's regarding. We can't see these factors because we are only operating in these four dimensions. Our brains and bodies as human beings aren't able to see it. We just perform actions all day, and forget most of them. We pay attention to the regular stuff of life, and good and bad things happen. We don't see the processes in between and we don't see how the karma is actually moving. It isn't within our capacity. It is that simple.

The Buddha said that there were four things that a regular human being is unable to fully comprehend because our minds are not equipped to do so. One of them is calculating or predicting the results of karma. We can't fully understand karma, but we can see the results of karma. Briefly mentioning the other three mysteries, they are: the process of becoming a Buddha, the powers associated with deep absorption, and the origin of the cosmos.

So once again, good karma doesn't mean good fortune. It means that there must have been positive actions in the past that allow us to reap the results of

these actions. So, the lesson is obvious, isn't it? Every action produces a reaction or a result. Therefore, we cannot get away with anything! There is nothing, absolutely nothing, that doesn't produce a result. For example, if we think we can lie and get away with it, maybe we can in the short term, but it will always come back to haunt us in some way. The person we are hiding the truth from may not find out about the deception, but there will be painful consequences for that action at some point. When there is a wallet full of money on a table and no one is around, of course we don't take it. If we do, we could be causing difficulties for the one who comes back to claim it, and we will surely experience a similar negative result.

This is different from judgment. Karmic results are not created by some powerful being in the sky punishing us for what we do. It is our level of consciousness that suffers, and thus brings forth a negative situation for us and potentially a negative future life too. When we do negative things, we damage ourselves. Our consciousness gets further entangled in impurities and pulls us down.

There isn't any negative action that we get away with because there will be a negative result at some point. There isn't any positive thing that we get away with either! It is impossible to do something positive that doesn't reap a positive result. It must reap a positive result.

It might not be immediately apparent, but don't be discouraged. It has created more purity in our consciousness and it will bring good things to us sooner or later. It has no choice but to bear fruit. It is a universal law and isn't under anyone's power to control. Even gods are slaves to it.

All beings, from those in the lowest realms, all the way up to those in the highest and most sublime states are all where they are because of a certain set of actions. We are all here because of what we have done. We will not stay here because we continue to perform actions. As we continue to "do" more, we move upward or downward, to more wholesome states or less wholesome states, more pure states or less pure states.

Even angels, higher deities and formless beings have all performed actions, good and bad, that have led them to where they are right now. The good or peaceful actions that they have done are bearing fruit. They are receiving the results of their positive actions. They have also performed negative actions and those will also bear fruit at some point. They will not be able to sustain their place in these higher realms forever. Ultimately, they have to come back as a human, an animal, a greedy or an angry being in any of the realms I've described when their previous bad karma catches up with them. We've probably all heard of fallen angels. They really

do “fall” from higher planes of existence, to lower ones. Their good merits have run out of steam. Their bad karma from the past cause them to see or hear something adverse, then negative feelings come up, and the downward movement begins.

We can move from any level to any level. If we were a mean and angry person but we were able to cultivate an intense stillness in our meditation, we could be a deity for the rest of this universe and into another one. However, once our good karmic results are up, the results of our negative karma kick in, and our consciousness wakes up as an angry ghost. In fact, when we are that high up, the anger is suppressed for so long that once the good stuff is gone, all that is left is negativity. So we would slide right down. For an animal to become human, it has to be moral, patient, nonviolent, and without envy or greed. When it dies it could jump up to human or even a lower angel like a nature spirit. Pets were often humans, as many people sense but can't confirm. Dogs are primarily dull-minded, laying down in dazes for hours on end. They may have been humans who had been drinkers or on drugs, pacifying their mind into a perpetual daze. If we were more alert but timid or fearful, we could become a house cat. We can skip from any realm to any realm based on the karma we cultivate.

Has anyone read the book *Conversations with God*? I don't want to give anything away if we haven't. I'll just say that the example of a god in this book is one that "decides" to return to suffering and imperfections. Some such beings even "decide" to get lost as a human again. These gods are not eternal beings as they believe themselves to be. The positive karmic results that brought them to their respective godly realms expired, and they had to come back down to the sense pleasure realms, only to struggle again for fleeting moments of happiness as we do down here. As high and powerful as they may have been for a time, even they haven't ended the cycle of samsara.

All beings in existence, as a result of their actions and their development, are revolving around in one of the three worlds: the sense desire realms, the form realms or the formless realms. Some can stay so long in certain places that they think they are there permanently. They are astonished when it ends and they have to descend. Nothing is permanent. Some don't want to be peaceful anymore and believe they are choosing to descend. They didn't really choose to descend, the results of their good karma just ran out.

In the simplest of terms: all positive actions have positive results, and all negative actions have negative results. There is absolutely no way around that. We

have all done good and bad things, but hopefully not terrible things. All actions will bear fruit. Although we can never be certain what, when and where the results of our karma will take place, we can certainly do a lot of work to ensure whatever happens will turn out as well as possible. It helps if we understand the four types of karma that affect our next life.



Whatever our state of mind is at death has a huge impact on what happens next.

The Four Types of Karma



Weighty Karma

There are four types of karma. The first kind is considered weighty karma, meaning a really positive action or a really negative one. This is the most powerful kind of karma. If we perform weighty karma, it is certain to completely influence our next life drastically. If we perform any of the negative weighty karma, there is absolutely nothing we can do to avoid terrible pain in our next life. The worst of these things is to murder an enlightened being or harm a Buddha. We would basically be doomed. Then there is the killing or murdering of one's own parents. Something as evil as killing our parents cannot be undone. No matter how much good we do, it will not prevent a hellish rebirth. Another weighty action is creating a schism in an enlightenment school. Imagine the Buddha or an arahant has a group of students training to become enlightened, and then someone creates a school with less virtuous principles and values and attracts them away from this great path into a lower one. This is quite a sin.

If we think about it, we realize how rare an opportunity it is for an individual consciousness wandering through all the realms in the universe, to have the chance to learn to how to cultivate the same purity as a Buddha. Then an enemy of the school takes the student away from that opportunity. It is a tremendous evil. It could take a hundred or a thousand lifetimes for a being to have that opportunity again.

An analogous sin for us would be convincing a friend, who has sobered up and turned his life around, to go back to hanging out in bars. We may be jealous and intend to sabotage his efforts. That is really bad stuff, and there will be consequences, but not considered weighty to the extent of killing our parents or creating a schism in Buddhism.

We can be doomed for very, very long, and many lifetimes when negative weighty karma occurs. However, nothing is forever. All things are impermanent.





Karma at Death

The next type of karma is our karma at death. This refers to the final moment before death. In that moment, whatever our state of consciousness is, or whatever we are thinking or feeling in that moment, is the second most critical factor that will determine what happens after we die. A lot of meditators and Buddhist practitioners say this is the true reason for our practice. We practise for death. Here is the reason why: Whatever our state of mind is at death has a huge impact on what happens next.

If we are in a state of feeling, “I’m ready. I can let go. Let me be free,” or “Life was good and I’ve had many blessings.”, such states of mind can have a tremendous positive effect on what happens next. If we die in a terrible state of fear or struggle, this will produce a negative result at death. Usually, if we haven’t engaged in any spiritual practices or mindfulness, gone for counselling or therapy or practised any inner work on ourselves, then the mind, near death, will do what it does habitually or instinctively as its coping mechanism.

The human is a creature of habit. Our mind goes to what it did yesterday, because it did that the day before. We have been building a multitude of habits without knowing it: energetically, emotionally, with thought

patterns and postures. For instance, what we do when we come home from work, the way we talk with people, the way we move our heads or hands, and even what we think when we see certain people, places and objects, are all happening out of habit. Whether we have created these routines consciously or not, we wallow around in them all the time. Then when something difficult or scary happens to us, like death approaching, we will default to whatever habit we have ingrained in ourself. If we typically tighten up and become afraid when we feel pain, then we are likely to do exactly that when death approaches.

If our last moment is greedy, we end up as a greedy spirit. If our last moment is fearful or angry, we become a fearful or angry spirit. If our last moment is filled with opinions, we end up as an ignorant spirit. If it's sublime and blissful, we may become a form or formless deity. If it's wholesome and happy, we may move into a heaven realm. If we are decent and moral, and reflecting on the good things we have done in our lifetime, we may return as a human being again.

It is very important for us to learn to become accepting and allowing in times that normally elicit fear and anger. Can we become mindful of these mental states so that we are not totally invested in them when they arise? Can we be accepting of what's in front of us

and not make such a painful story surrounding it, but rather, build better habits? If we can work on these things, then as death approaches we will have a beautiful vibration. A lot of people say that they practice meditation just for this moment, the moment when death takes us.

We must ask ourselves, how are we going to be as we die? Are we going to be the sum total of whatever has randomly happened, having done no work on ourselves at all? Or, are we going to be a beautiful shining light in the face of trauma and difficulties? Assuming none of us have murdered our parents or holy beings, and assuming we won't successfully convert Buddhist monks to Scientology, the major determining factor of what realm we will endure in our next life is that last moment.

With all the generosity, compassion, love, service and wholesome qualities we cultivate in our lives, the most important moment is that last moment. If our heart has been a beautiful one, we have nothing to fear.

The best thing to do in a tragedy or at the moment of death, if we are not sure, is to reflect on all the most wholesome and benevolent things we have done in our lifetime and to reflect on all our joys. It is extremely important as we age to remember this and to encourage elderly people whom we know to keep positive. This may sound arrogant or self-indulgent, yet it is extremely beneficial to reflect on the goodness we have done.

In Thailand, we practice this habit. Millions chant and pray daily, and in those prayers, there is a wish for all the merit we have accumulated be shared with all living beings. Furthermore, whenever we perform a meritorious deed, we tell lots of people. I used to think this was pretentious. What it actually does, however, is give others the opportunity to rejoice in our good deeds. There is no shame at all in telling everyone about the wonderful things we've done when we see it as a way others can share in the joy of good doing. High quality minds feel wonderful when they hear about the good of others. They have an opportunity of sharing in the positive karma. The word that Thais use for this is *anumodana*, which means "I rejoice in your good deeds." It is the opposite of jealousy. When we do good things and let people know, others get the opportunity to share in the merits of our good karma. Of course, we should make sure we are not bragging and would genuinely like to give the people we tell the opportunity to feel joyful and perform good karma. *Anumodana* to all of you who have found your way to these teachings!

Once again, regarding death, if we are not a meditator and haven't cultivated states of peace, then we can reflect on the wholesome things we have done instead: charity, raising children, dedicating our time to help others, and any meritorious or selfless acts

we've done. All of these will help improve our future lifetimes. We should practice often reflecting on all of the good we have done, having clear images in our mind about them, so as we near the moment of death these images and wholesome feelings may appear automatically out of habit, without any effort.

For those of us who have a powerful faith in a religion, another beautiful possibility is to focus on an image of the being or beings we worship as we near the time of our death. We make sure to feel the love and connect with their energy. Upon leaving this life, we may move into a realm where we can be near or in service to them.



Habitual Karma

The third type of karma is habitual. This entails our whole lifetime of being involved with our patterns. It is karma that we repeat over and over, forcing the repercussions to multiply. This includes all habits: smoking or drinking, or even subtler habits like inciting arguments or putting people down. It doesn't matter if we are conscious of them or not. We build our identity out of them and hold to this identity so tightly that we end up taking those habits and a similar personality along with us into the next lifetime.



Non-Habitual Karma

The last type of karma is non-habitual. It occurs when we do something one time and forget about it. It has the least power. It will bear fruit, but it will do so in an orderly fashion. It is less powerful in creating a next lifetime but it will bear fruit within that lifetime. For example, we may be born into a very wealthy family or come into money easily in our next lifetime as a result of giving a lot to charity and being generous in this one. However,

as generous as we were, we may have done a negative thing or two, like hit our child or secretly cheat on our spouse. If we really hurt someone, we may have all this money in the next life, but we may suffer a major debilitating injury or suffer from terrible heart break.

To recap, we have the weighty karma, the last moment before death, the habits and the things we did just once or twice. The weighty karma and the last moment before death are likely what will project us into the next life. The habits and the things we did and forgot about will likely decorate that next life.



Moving Forward



From now on, whatever negative things happen to us in this life, let us not see ourselves as victims. Anything negative that happens to us in this life has been created by us. Whether we remember our past actions or not, the consequence is unbelievably just and fair and had to happen. It is a big lesson for us. It is freeing when we finally understand this. When we trip and fall and get injured, immediately we may feel we must have done something negative in the past. We may not know what, but we can hope the score has been settled and one less negative result is to come. We are burning off bad karma when things go wrong, and as long as we do only good moving forward, we will have less and less bad karmic results to suffer though. When we can see receiving negative results as things that had to occur because we have paved the way for this outcome, we can come to peace with what our life holds.

In general, there is no karma we perform that can be undone, however, we can lessen the severity. If we do something harmful, we are going to reap the negative consequences of that. On the other hand, if we do positive things, we will receive favourable results. The results aren't always like what happened in the original

action, but there may be some similarities. For example, let's say we were in a war in a past life and we killed people as an obligation of our duty, but we happened to do it in a very angry and hostile way. There will certainly be negative consequences, but we won't necessarily be murdered ourselves. We may suffer physical violence or be physically disabled. Now, if we happened to be a great person otherwise in that lifetime, we would have many good consequences in the next, but we still can't avoid the negative karma of the war. In the next life, we may be severely disabled, but our prior goodness could also bring a wonderful family, wealth, love and a meaningful life. We may still receive the disability from the powerful negative action, but it won't all be bad.

To recap, once we have performed an action, it's already out there. It's done. It's going to bring a result. We can't stop it. If we continue to harp on it, thinking we shouldn't have done it or playing out alternate, better situations in our head, we are actually re-creating this negative karma repetitively and it's certain to multiply and create more bad situations.

The major lesson we see here in regards to karma is once we have done something wrong, we must drop it and apologize. Let's not revisit it. Revisiting it in the sense of letting go of past pain, grudges and forgiving is a beautiful thing, but revisiting it as in reliving it is

actually causing more negative karma for us. It is best to move on as soon as we notice what we are doing and then have the intention to do more good and create good habits moving forward.

I hope we see how important it is to cultivate good mental habits. It not only makes this lifetime more pleasant, but will affect where we go from here. We can't control what will arise in our consciousness right before death, but if we put the work in and cultivate enough goodness and wholesomeness, that last moment before we die will automatically be a wholesome one.



How Mindfulness Helps



My quest for truth has brought me through many spiritual domains and practices over the past sixteen years. After dedicating myself to different meditation techniques, spending years in and out of silent retreats and solitude, training in and schooling others in the art of Reiki and other healing modalities, making the depressed happy again, shrinking tumors and cultivating psychic abilities, I have found no practice as important as mindfulness practice. Mindfulness makes its importance

seen in every aspect of life; physical, emotional and spiritual; work, play and family time. Let me explain how it makes its way into these discussions about the realms of existence and karma.

If we are practising mindfulness correctly, when painful emotions or impurities appear in our heart, they will disappear immediately. Mindfulness and negative mental states cannot coexist. If worry or fear comes up in the moment before we die, a well-established mindfulness practice will guard the heart against it. The fear will drop off and there will be a moment of wholesomeness. Even if our mindfulness wasn't strong enough to see it immediately, having practised, mindfulness will persevere as the most important thing we ever did. If we die with fear and end up in a lower realm of existence for it, the mindfulness will actually work for us at some point early on and will see the fear, even in the next lifetime. When the fear disappears, it will carry us out of that lower lifetime into a higher one. A mindful moment is always a wholesome one, and the power of that bright light for a moment is enough to bring our consciousness to a higher plane. The karma of correct mindfulness practice crosses over lifetimes. Mindfulness will see the impurity like fear or anger at some point. For example, if we are reborn as a fresh new ghost, we could be wallowing in our worry about how our loved ones fare. Then

from our karma of practising mindfulness for years in our previous existence, our mind slips out of the story for a moment and sees the worry itself. The worry vanishes, and consciousness is light and bright for a moment. In the next moment, we are no longer a new ghost, we are now beaming above a beautiful temple where our mindfulness teacher resides. Our stint as a lower being was a short one. Mindfulness saved the day!

If we don't have mindfulness, this lifetime and future ones are filled with danger and hardship. If we are a ghost stewing in our past sadness and worries, we can stay that way for a long time. We will have to wait until the negative karmic results are over. Sometimes lower beings come across some light or a healer and can get transmuted. This would be the negative karmic results of being a ghost finally wearing thin, and it being time for the past good karma to bear fruit.

In some cases, our own funeral might be enough to bring us out of negativity. If it's a beautiful one, and our consciousness is not too low yet and can listen in, it might be enough to move us higher, out of our negativity. Relatives could be reflecting on good times, and showing so much love. We may move from our perpetual state of worry or blame into a state of happy euphoria where a negative existence cannot be sustained.

Sometimes our funeral isn't enough. We may have to wait until a healer or psychic notices us, and is willing to help us. If that doesn't happen, if that's not part of our karma, we may have a long and painful existence, wallowing around in misery until the results of our negative karma fizzle out. In some places, like the Keg Mansion in downtown Toronto, or Old Montreal, there are ghosts who dwell for hundreds of years. These are mostly asuras, the type of ghosts who are stuck in opinion, wanting people to get out of their home. Some are lowly, lost souls not realizing they are dead and are wondering why all these people are in their house! They will have to stay there until their negative karma runs out and the benefits of their positive karma kicks in.

Reasonably good mindfulness practitioners can be saved from future negative lifetimes. Ultimately, mindfulness can do so much more for us. Attaining happy future lifetimes is a mere fortunate side effect of mindfulness and not its true intent. Its true purpose is to begin the process of seeing the truth of our own body and mind, for full liberation from the cycle of suffering. Mindfulness leads to an understanding of the way things are. In Buddhist terms, mindfulness leads to enlightening wisdom. When this happens, samsara, the cycle of birth and death, ceases, and all that remains is the state of nirvana. We no longer circle around in the cycle of birth and death,



moving around and around from this realm to that realm, just to die, be reborn, and suffer through aging, sickness and death all over again. Once we move past suffering and death, and attain nirvana, we have ended our karma. There is no more clinging to the world. It's the end of rebirth in any realm at all. It is complete bliss. This is not an experience we can understand until it is ours. To a Buddha, or a fully enlightened being, even beings in the highest and most beautiful realms are still considered suffering. The easiest way to see that they are still suffering is that they can't stay there. These are temporary states that wilt away like a lovely flower. There are more subtle aspects of why it's suffering as well, but this isn't the time for that. There is no end to the discussions we can have regarding karma. There can be an end, however, to karma itself.

I am happy to have finally discussed karma in some detail. This is very important knowledge; to know that everything we do has consequences that will return back to us. If we believe an impurity in our heart and we talk and act harmfully from that place, we must know that it will bring forth a negative result, not just for the one we are hurting, but for us too. When we accept the law of karma, our life has more purpose and clarity. We have a very powerful and important reason to do only good from now on.

The ultimate goal of karma is to have no karma left at all. Being “karma-less” is synonymous with enlightenment. Once we remove all anger, all jealousy, all greed, and all fear from our hearts, we are not reborn into any of the realms ever again. We are one with the undying state, the unconditioned, sharing the purity of the Buddha and other enlightened beings. And it all starts with mindfulness.



The highest karma that we can do now is to cultivate the skills and habits that will end our karma once and for all.







Will the action always have a result in the next life, or can it be in this life?

It will be in this life as much as in future lives. It's not exclusively in other lives, but in the big picture, we should concentrate on our next lives. We can't guarantee that the good things we do in this life will reap their rewards soon, but we can be sure they will come eventually. In the meantime, we should take the opportunity to cultivate quality future lifetimes or better yet, no future lifetimes, and leave behind suffering. With a human brain, there is no way to understand what karmic results will happen and whether it will effect this life or a next life. We just do good things and know that it will bear fruit, whether it be in this life or a future life.



Is it important to know about our past lives and if there's trauma, how do we heal past lives?

We carry with us in our energy field our entire history of pain past. We can't always remember the stories but we can feel the emotions. Sometimes the emotions are extremely old, and they feel old. Some of them we have felt as a child and we didn't know why. Some are intense and arise often. We may feel attacked when someone says something even innocuous. Inappropriate emotions are a sure sign of a past life experience. If we are good at meditation and concentration and we pay attention to a negative emotion, sometimes the world will disappear and we will have a clear memory of the past. We may see the situation that was the sponsoring cause of that deeply held emotion. It's not necessarily a pleasant experience, but when we come out of it, it is possible that we have healed from it; that it has been lifted away, out of our energy field. It's a very worthwhile experience. Sometimes we may cough it out, throw it up or even have convulsions. Afterwards, it feels beautiful and bright. This is called rebirthing or a past





life healing. We remember the trauma and dispel the pain. That's one way we can get over our past lives. I mention this process because it's actually beneficial. Other memories may be nice, like someone telling you that you were a princess or an important figure, but those are just for entertainment. It is useful to feel the old emotion to clear away something painful.

There's no reason in this day and age, with all the research and credible experiences of so many, to deny the possibility of past lives. Instead, we should consider our karma with everything we do, and work hard at making our next lives livable.

Who decides how long we stay in certain realms, and are the Akashic Records involved?

The Akashic Records are not a place, it's just the sum total of all knowledge and it's accessible to some people more than others. Regarding how long we reside in realms, the Buddha said there are four things that no human should try to understand; one of them is how the results of karma work, how it is that one result comes before







another or for how long.

When the Buddha was in India, people would come to him and he'd see why they had certain misfortunes by way of his deep concentrative powers. He would see what they had done wrong in a past life that resulted in their present misfortunes.

No being can exist outside of karma, except an enlightened being. Any action any unenlightened being performs has results, as part of the karmic circle of suffering, of samsara. There is no one deciding. It's the impurity and purity weighing on our consciousness that attract the upcoming events. We can't understand this, just like we can't understand electricity or gravitation force. We can study the behaviour and movement of large bodies and small, but we didn't start it and no one decided it. It just works that way. Forces just work as they do along a causal chain.



What is the best path for us and what can help us along that path?

On our path, there are things we are destined for in this life and in future lives. The only path that is worthy - that can lead to permanent peace and happiness - is the path that leads us out of samsara. There is nothing or no being that can come in and help independent of what we have put in. Only our good karma will help us. If we do receive any assistance, we are merely reaping the fruit of good karma we have performed in the past.





*“ Anyone who claims to know who he
really is, hasn’t seen what really is. ”*

Chapter 4



Human Potential and Enlightenment

Human beings have far more potential than the vast majority of us realize. In fact our potential is greater than we could have ever hoped. With the right training and enough practice, we can become seers of past and future, healers of a higher order, move through far reaches of the universe with astral travel, experience states of unfathomable love and peace, and wash our heart clean of any personal suffering. We are capable of wisdom that penetrates through conjecture and uncovers truths that science alone never will.

As an example relatively easy to achieve, I would like to bring our attention to the fact that humans, unlike anything below us, have the potential to recognize that the body and the mind are two different entities. The mind is something other than the brain. The brain is physical and the mind is something that can be seen as the observing consciousness. It is that which is able to silently witness whatever is being observed at any given time. This carries amazing potential. Some people are able to sustain the experience of mind and body

appearing distinct. They can sense that the mind is not the body and that the mind itself is an observer and not a sufferer. All the suffering appears to happen to the object of observation, such as the body, the emotions, but not the observation itself.

Investigating deeper into this “observing presence” leads to an experience of deep and vast spaciousness. One who is able to hold or enter this experience, could mistakenly believe that he or she has enlightened. It is true this is a wonderful aspect of human potential, but we must not jump to conclusions about enlightenment as many famous authors and spiritual teachers have done.

Firstly, enlightenment is a word and a concept. Secondly, it’s an English word, and English is a very new language. If we consider for a moment that it’s a new word then naturally it will be understood by different people, different cultures and schools of thought and have a range of meanings. It is probably agreed uniformly, however, that enlightenment in a spiritual context refers to the highest achievement that one can attain. This understandably leads to the widespread belief that enlightenment refers to the highest level of accomplishment in any sort of transcendent skill, power or knowledge. If we define enlightenment in this way, then a danger comes: we would consider enlightenment to be the

mastery of whatever skill, transcendent ability or knowledge that we, our community or our religion regard as the most important.

It follows then that someone will be declared enlightened because he or she has reached the highest point in their particular skill, practice, school or understanding. Of course, there are plenty of schools available, and each with its own standards, codes, ethics and motivation. We must keep this in mind when someone from another school has reached their highest point of skill or understanding and is considered enlightened as well. We can see the problem here when two so-called enlightened people have reached very different levels of knowledge or experience, or have honed a very different set of skills. It is easy to see how language, culture and schools of thought have no choice but to misunderstand what enlightenment is.

This is especially true in new age spirituality. We can look at Reiki as a specific example. Some people believe that Reiki, a holistic healing art, is the greatest gift available. I can't blame them, because before we learn Reiki we are often living a mundane worldly existence. Then suddenly, we open up to the availability of pure, healing energy that runs through us and transmits natural vibrations through our hands. We feel like Jesus or another great master from the past who could magically heal

with his hands. We feel like we are part of that magic. When we continue to practise and become a certified Reiki Master, we feel we have reached the top of the Reiki chain and can teach it to others. I have even heard some people describe their teacher as their “enlightened Reiki Master.” One who believes Reiki to be the highest healing art available to humans would consider someone who has mastered Reiki to be enlightened. Years ago, my Reiki teacher had an arrogance about him and seemed to consider himself enlightened and all-knowing. He was very talented, yet other schools of thought would see his arrogance and lust for power as traits of an unenlightened mind, regardless of the tremendous healing and psychic abilities he acquired.

If we use the word *enlightened* very loosely to describe a master of a particular spiritual skill, then I suppose one could consider a true master of Reiki to be so. However, it still doesn’t mean that they have reached the highest in human potential. In fact, when we attain the level of Reiki Master, the title of “master” means that we have reached the skill level where we are able to open others up to that gift. It has absolutely nothing to do with enlightenment, if enlightenment is to mean the highest in human potential.



Masters, Teachers



In many senses, referring to such a person as a master is more appropriate than declaring him or her to be enlightened. The original meaning of the word *master* was simply teacher, and this was perhaps the best meaning of the word. We used to call a teacher, a master. In this sense, master is the most accurate. The word *teacher* has been widely used to describe those that educate in schools, so the title master identifies and differentiates someone who teaches specialized arts that are not taught in traditional school systems. Of course, *master* has also evolved as a word to distinguish one who is at the top of his or her trade. I like that meaning. It would be nice if we reserved the word *master* in a spiritual context to denote only true masters, instead of taking liberties with its sacredness.

How can we measure when someone has completely mastered an art? That's a very difficult thing to do. With some arts, especially those that aren't based on intellect but which are energetic in nature, it's quite easy to measure whether someone is a master or not. The easy way to measure this is by requiring the full development of a particular major chakra, which is an energy centre of the body. Once a chakra is fully and completely developed, one can be considered a true master

at whatever it is that she does or teaches to accomplish this. Some examples could be a master healer, a yoga master or a master psychic. Rather than using the word *enlightened*, the word *master* is much more appropriate for someone who has mastered a skill, or who may be teaching it to others and has at least one chakra completely open and free.

Let's consider a few examples. First of all, let's have a look at Reiki. The term Reiki Master in most lineages is used to designate one who has been fully attuned to the Reiki energy, usually at the third level of training. The success of the attuning process depends on the competency of the teacher, not the master-in-training. This doesn't speak of the student's abilities as a healer, psychic or channel; it doesn't speak of any miraculous healings or profound experiences within the trade they have had; it doesn't speak of the student's intuitiveness to the flow of energy and information. While the chakras of a Reiki student with a capable teacher are clearly more developed, there is no requisite that a Reiki Master must have any fully open chakras. I know plenty of "Reiki Masters" who struggle in life and have chakras full of congestion. The word *master* sounds lofty and I'm sure level three students enjoy having such a title, but when masters aren't true masters, I feel it does more damage than good to this

very special and effective healing art. In my lineage, even though we have the highest competency standards that I have seen, we shy away from using the term Reiki Master. We have the term Certified Reiki Practitioner for level three, and Reiki Master/Teacher at level four, the slash emphasizing that master means teacher.

I would like to provide examples of fields whose leaders have been considered enlightened, but would be better recognized as masters, if they have fully developed chakras. A good example of a true Yoga Master is someone who has fully developed the lower chakras. True Yoga Masters are easily able to move in very meaningful ways with a lot of control and grace, powerfully connect with nature, and find a place of stillness in their meditation. Because they have attained the highest level in the body of knowledge at their school, some Yoga Masters may believe they have reached enlightenment. Others may believe this of them as well. The term *master* is more accurate here than enlightened.

Tantra is another example. It is an art which began in Tibet as a method of trying to find enlightenment through the unification of the yin and the yang energies. Unfortunately, it was reduced in the West as a fun and “spiritual” way to have sexual relations. There is a real and powerful energetic aspect to Tantra. In fact, a true Tantric Master will have a fully developed sex

chakra. When she feels the oneness of the yin and the yang energy, she may feel she has reached the top of human potential. She may be regarded by many to be enlightened and she may mistake herself to be so as well. Although unenlightened, a Tantric Master may have moved to a powerfully higher state of understanding and perhaps a higher state of unity.

Herein lies another issue regarding enlightenment. Some consider an enlightened being to be one who sees the truth of oneness. However, a Tantric Master who senses the oneness of male and female energies may believe that she completely understands oneness. She may certainly have a level of understanding that is far more profound than regular people. While she should be highly respected as a master, she may not sense oneness as the same oneness that other masters do. We can't have two onenesses!

A Yoga Master may sense a oneness with nature; with the Earth. There are many wonderful yoga teachers in Canada but unfortunately, none of them are true Yoga Masters with a chakra so fully developed that there is a final sustained connection with nature. That is a powerful Yoga Master indeed. Even so, when that powerful Yoga Master comes into an office building in the middle of a city, she may find it unbearable. Her oneness is with the natural world but the oneness may not be complete,

and falters in certain situations. If she develops the ability to be in a state of unity wherever she needs be, the Yoga Master may feel like her journey is completed and her followers may agree. She may even be considered enlightened by some. To another school, however, she may appear wonderfully developed, but still has room to develop more through the other chakras. We can see how there is confusion around who is enlightened and who is not.



A spiritual master may have developed chakras, but if his heart is even slightly perturbed by the gravest of calamities, nirvana he sees not.

The Higher Chakras



At an even higher level, a fully developed heart chakra is a very beautiful example of the experience of infinite love. The Pali word for it is *metta*, which means loving-kindness, universal love or more simply, friendliness. In this sense the friendliness isn't merely with people but with absolutely everything in the universe. There is no feeling that isn't friendly. There is no ill-will or lack of kindness towards anything or anyone. When one has

a fully developed heart chakra this is one's experience. Everyone and everything appears as a friend. There is a love for everything and everyone. This fully developed heart chakra is characteristic of some of the highest beings who have walked the planet. They have so much kindness and forgiveness that they can even forgive those who have tortured them. Jesus would be considered a being had who achieved a fully developed heart chakra. We may have ideas of others who have had fully developed heart chakras. It is a beautiful state, and one could wonder how it could be that this isn't enlightenment. Enlightenment is a word for the highest in human potential and for some, this fully developed heart chakra appears to be the highest experience available to humans. It is much higher than 99.9 percent of people's experiences. It is extremely, extremely rare, but there is even greater potential than this.

Another example of a fully developed chakra and mistaking that it is the highest level of human potential is a fully developed third eye. Once one fully develops this chakra, there is the amazing experience of all seeing and all knowing. It appears that all information, past, present and future is easily available to someone developed to this level. Many of us want to be this powerful, don't we? Unfortunately the way to develop this chakra will not be explained here. One who has a fully developed

third eye may consider himself enlightened and followers may agree. He has priceless information readily available to him. This is a tremendous power. Nevertheless, my mindfulness teacher describes someone who has developed and is absorbed with these powers as a child playing with toys.

I want to warn us that if this power in the third eye is greatly developed without the heart chakra being developed also, it can be extremely dangerous. Anyone who hasn't worked on his or her heart will still have a lot of ill-will and anger. Having a powerful third eye without compassion and love can be disastrous and could create some of the greatest evils imaginable. I strongly urge all of us who are working on their psychic abilities to simultaneously work on love, otherwise we can be a danger to ourself and the world.

There is one more chakra that has an even more powerful experience of oneness, and that is the full development of the crown chakra. The experiences available through the crown chakra were known to the ancients, predating Buddhism and go as far back as the Vedas in India. Some beings who have this chakra fully open experience an amazing sense of oneness with the universe. It is described as the individual soul expanding and returning to god, or to the infinite Self for its union. The identification with the person on Earth is gone, and the identification

of the self is with the totality. There is a sense of oneness with the entire universe and there is no longer identification with the separate person as who we are. We are now the Self. We are the space in which everything happens and we are the manifest as well. We are one with everything.

This may sound like the highest in human potential. For a being that is still revolving around in the cycle of samsara, it is the highest potential. However, there is a human potential even higher than this experience of the oneness. There is something of a higher order or potential, because someone who no longer identifies with the person is still identified with pure consciousness, stillness, space or emptiness as the self. As such, they are still lost in samsara, and still involved in the cycle of life. They will spend an extremely long period of time, eons and eons after death, reborn in a serene and still realm of consciousness. They will hold to that state of oneness until one day that state ends and they are reborn again. They can be born again as a human being or any other kind of being.

For such a being, the crown chakra was fully developed and yet suffering wasn't completely eliminated. Instead, there was an amazing spiritual realization and ability, and it was held to or entered into. To paraphrase one of my teacher's teachers, everything that has an

entrance also has an exit. They will return to suffering. They found something beautiful and profound, moved into it and held to it.

This realm is unbelievably beautiful and blissful but it is still a realm. As in any other realm, one enters, and then one must exit. It may appear to them as a decision to exit. If they feel a desire to experience it again, then they are reborn.

There are a few famous masters who have reached this state and eventually they too will be reborn in suffering because they are still identified with the state of emptiness or stillness as who they are. They may not realize this, however. If the mind still identifies with anything, even stillness, or holds to any state, it must eventually come back and continue cycling. Any teaching of holding one's consciousness somewhere, is putting it into a realm that it must exit one day. It isn't a permanent metamorphosis. We can only hold things for so long. There are many claiming to teach enlightenment who have mastered great skills and mental states of serene bliss, stillness and oneness. Some genuinely believe they are enlightened with all of their heart and soul. I don't believe anyone could convince them otherwise. I suppose they will find out the truth for themselves upon exiting one day.



Enlightenment



There are those alive today who have reached the highest in human potential. These beings are not reborn at all. There is no identification with anything, not even stillness. There is a realization of non-self in anything. This realization cannot happen in exploration of any realms or states. It happens automatically when all pain has been understood, when there is wisdom seeing the truth of the impermanence of all phenomena; the truth that no state available, pleasant and unpleasant, is satisfactory; and the truth that there isn't a self to be found.

Those who gain this wisdom wash away all desire to be in any realm. They wash away from the heart all suffering: all greed, all anger and all the things that keep them locked in as any kind of being. Thus they are no longer reborn. This is the highest potential of a human being. This is the state of no more karma, and no more rebirth. This state may not seem alluring or interesting to some. It all depends on what level of development we are at.

We can see how it's better to use the words mastery or full development of particular chakras, and leave *enlightenment* to describe the highest potential of a human being. It may not seem like the highest yet

to us, and that is understandable. We must see that the cycle of life, regardless of what level we are at within it, is still a cycle. We must see that we revolve around in this cycle incessantly. If we have a very powerful third eye, we may be able to see how long this soul or consciousness has travelled from life to life. We may sense how it continues to revolve around in similar patterns, making mistakes in one life-time, and then the same mistakes in the next.

Even in this lifetime we may sense ourself succumbing to greed, anger and desires again and again. We can see that no matter which high and beautiful places we were in, we always had to come back down. We couldn't wash away all of the greed and anger, and that it was at best only subdued for a while. When we see this clearly, then we really understand the desire for no more rebirths. We wish to get out of this cycle of life, death and rebirth, rather than merely wishing for great powers and a great capacity for love.

Don't get me wrong, these are all very wonderful things. They are worthy developments that are necessary for all of us. I teach them too. However, when we truly understand the highest in human potential, we reserve the word *enlightenment* to describe the end of all suffering, the end of all rebirth and the end of all karma. We don't use it to describe any particular amazing

achievement or accomplishment.

Though none of us are fully developed in any of our chakras here, some of us are highly developed and are able to be teachers to those less developed. Some of us may or may not achieve full mastery or enlightenment in this lifetime. We may or may not develop a fully open chakra as a permanent state either, but one thing that is possible in this lifetime, that I hope we will experience, are moments in which at least one chakra opens fully.

It is an amazing achievement in human potential to get even a glimpse into what it is like to have at least one chakra fully developed or fully open even for a short time. This is experienced as a momentary blast without blockages, where the chakra fully expands and the energy spins at maximum capacity freely through it. This is such a powerful and important moment that we should seek, simply because this experience is never forgotten. Such experiences will always be remembered deep down within our consciousness and we can always refer to and speak about the truth of them from our direct experience.

We must be sure not to speak about such experiences as the highest truth as this is wrong and doing so can prevent our moving forward. Often, we get glimpses into some powerful truths. For example, we may come

to know our self and nature to be one. We may understand what true metta or universal love is. Then we may be able to bring our mind back to these experiences sometimes, having remembered what it feels like. If we are able to present these states to others powerfully, there may be a transmission that spawns deep experiences within them. We may be able to make others feel happy, loved or peaceful in a very special way when they are around us. When we move into and out of very powerful experiences, we can be great teachers, but we are certainly not enlightened.

How do we know there is no enlightenment when we move in and out of powerful spiritual states? Because once enlightened, there is no going into and out of any state. As my mindfulness teacher explains, once enlightened, there is no exit. We aren't aware and awake or experiencing oneness in one moment and then lost in an opinion in the next. The enlightened mind is not a realm or plane to visit.

In Buddhism, the highest potential of a human being is to no longer be reborn into any realm whatsoever, because without exception, every realm is seen as suffering. In Buddhism, this state of being beyond birth is called nirvana. Nirvana isn't to be confused with any realm or any heaven. Certainly, moving into the heavens is a wonderful experience. There are amazing beings

that exist in the heavens but there is an even higher potential for us, and them. Some of these beings are so immersed in sense pleasure that they are not interested in developing any further. On the other hand, some are very interested. There are some beings even in the heavens who are practising mindfulness and meditation to develop further and reach an even higher potential. This I have seen with my own eye.



Avatars



Let's not consider avatars, or bodhisattvas for that matter, as enlightened beings either. The word *avatar* is a general term for a highly developed being or deity that is either born into a human body or at some point takes over the energy field of a human for a benevolent purpose. An example of an avatar is the Dalai Lama, who is a highly developed being that chose a particular body to enter before its birth. That is a complete type of avatar as there wasn't another soul previously residing in the body. The being is born, in this case, with great destiny and including a fully developed heart chakra. What a precious and rare occurrence this is!

There are quite a few other avatars. Another example is Amma, who I mentioned earlier. Amma brings forth an infinite amount of love and amazing psychic powers because she's an embodiment of a god. Another avatar, whom most of us wouldn't have heard of, was a monk in Thailand named Luang Pu Lamai. This kind monk used to grow his own herbs, bless them with his powers, and eat them. He lived until the age of 148 by doing this. I was in his presence when he was 142 years old and witnessed him helping his 92 year old student to walk over to his seat! Before he died, he said there was a 17 year old in Cambodia that he was going to move to. This is an example of an avatar, a developed consciousness who takes over a 17 year old's body. The consciousness of the 17 year old gives way so this being can take over and pursue its noble endeavours.



Bodhisattvas

Bodhisattvas are beings well known to all sects of Buddhism; however, there are many who are not Buddhists. In some cases, they do not even know about Buddhism and are unaware that they are a bodhisattva. A bodhisattva is a being who returns in the distant future, perhaps a future so distant that the universe as we know it has collapsed and a new universe exists. This being returns to the human realm at a time when there are no enlightened beings and no knowledge of how enlightenment is accomplished. The bodhisattva will accomplish enlightenment on its own and teach others the path to enlightenment.

These are beings who have taken a vow or set an intention to return at some future time and become the first to enlighten. There are many people who have taken such a vow. This universe is unfathomably old and when it collapses and new ones form, there will be countless times when there will be no knowledge of enlightenment in existence. A bodhisattva is one who will then return, figure out how to enlighten and then teach others. The Buddha is an example of one of these bodhisattvas. He returned to Earth 2,500 years ago, enlightened on his own and taught many others. He was the first in our modern time period to achieve this. When he was

born, there were no enlightened beings and no teachings on how to enlighten. A bodhisattva is one who has this destiny and fulfills it at some point in the distant future.

A living example of this is the avatar, the 13th Dalai Lama. He is a modern day bodhisattva. His consciousness or soul is continuing to develop. He has some fully developed chakras but he is still staying in samsara. He will continue to cycle through lifetimes, being reborn again and again until there is a time when there are no teachings on enlightenment available anywhere in existence. At that time, his consciousness will return as some kind of being, perhaps a very alien creature to us depending on the state of the universe in that distant future. He will reach the state of enlightenment himself and teach it to others.

There are people who proclaim themselves to be bodhisattvas because they intend to be so. However, a true bodhisattva is a wholesome being who has undergone a very powerful spiritual process, and has attained at least one fully developed chakra. Another example of a bodhisattva, who is continuing to develop her perfection, is Mother Tawee in Thailand, with a fully developed divine eye. Some of my students have had the opportunity to meet and receive blessings from her.

Some beings, myself included, are denying the bodhisattva path in favour of ending suffering completely. This path is for those who aren't looking to continue to help and build virtues for eons and eventually be the first to enlighten in an era. It is about finding the way out of suffering with help from available teachings. This is called the disciple's path; the disciple being one who is perusing enlightenment under the tutelage of a lineage of enlightened masters, dating back to the Buddha. This path is available to all of us because the teachings are still available. If we follow the Buddha's teachings through those who have followed them to completion now, we may reach enlightenment, and thus, the highest in human potential.







Is Jesus Enlightened?

Jesus is an example of a powerful and popular bodhisattva. He even proclaimed that he will return, which is a sure sign that he wasn't interested in ending rebirth. He is a godly being, a king of a heaven, with tremendous power and love, and who is still available to guide humans. He may actually return in human form to continue to do so in a time when the teachings aren't available anymore. From a Buddhist perspective, this is called a bodhisattva. They are beings that continue to help from whatever realm they are in, and will eventually complete their destiny as a saviour, so to speak.



In my experiences, I can say Jesus has so many beautiful followers that even thinking about his love and kindness can invoke the presence of angelic beings, devoted followers who grace us with a taste of his splendor. Meditating on Shiva or Allah invokes similar grandeur, but texturally different experiences.





Do beings have the opportunity to reach enlightenment in a realm other than the human realm?

Oh yes! And many do. Many angels practise mindfulness, and more and more lately with the power of Luang Por Pramote, my teacher in Thailand. I have seen angels reading his books and sitting in on his Dhamma talks. It is a good thing that they were interested in enlightenment in past lives, because angels find it much more difficult work compared to humans. It is too happy up there! The pull to be free from suffering isn't as strong when suffering is hard to see.

In the case of lower beings, the suffering is certainly obvious, but the ability to achieve wholesome states like mindfulness is too difficult. Regarding animals, they can move up the chain, but I have never heard of the enlightenment of animals! As for ghostly beings, when they enter the light I don't usually know where they go. They certainly move higher up in the cycle of life from there. Their enlightenment, however, is unlikely without the necessary wisdom.





Even gods in the most sublime peace for eons have not enlightened. They would have a very difficult time practising for enlightenment. It sounds great to be one of these beings, but imagine that it was once a human or angel on the path to enlightenment, and getting very close. Then, it is enticed by a beautiful meditative state and becomes an expert in that instead of following its intended path. At death, it is reborn as this god, silent and unmovable, with no ability to see what is needed for enlightenment. It had an opportunity to enlighten in just a couple of human lifetimes, but instead went to spend an eon in stillness. It may have to wait until it is a human being again to return to the practice; even then, the teachings may no longer be available on the planet.

We as humans are in the setting most conducive to enlightenment. The teachings are available in this period so let's get to work!



*“ There are very few who are able to achieve
advanced states of meditation these days,
and even fewer willing to show us how. ”*



Chapter 5

The Light

These days we are far busier in our minds, far more distracted and have shorter attention spans than we have ever had throughout history. This is the case for many reasons. Our modern world is built around creating a short attention span so that we continue to be good consumers, stay up to date and conform with social expectations. Our modern lifestyle has made it more difficult for our mind to be calm and comfortable. We are born into the age of convenience, distraction, and instant gratification, seeking only the quickest solutions to all our problems.

One of the problems is desire. We want to do too many things, go to too many places and see too many sights. We have questions firing at a rapid pace and expect answers immediately at our fingertips. Since we are so demanding, anxious and easily distracted, it is hard for us to achieve the higher states of mind that are available through meditation.

Another reason why it is hard to achieve these states is the teachers aren't available anymore. The teachers are born into this age too, and there are very few who

are able to achieve advanced states of meditation, and even fewer willing to show us how. Regarding the light, most teachers today have an accidental experience with it and cannot reproduce it. Some saw it when in a coma or in a near-death experience. Others during a seizure! It is rare to come into contact with someone who is able to achieve the light and teach others how to experience it too. Even if the rare occasion presents itself, will we have the interest and attention span to listen and understand? Will we have the patience to practice?

Not many people are interested in the light these days. Many don't even believe it exists. Of course everyone would be interested in the light if they knew how happy it makes us and how readily available it is. Relatively speaking, it is not as easily available as going on the internet and googling it. Yet, for something this important and fulfilling, the light is rather easy to achieve.

To achieve such experiences is worthwhile when we consider how life-changing they are. We can simply practise meditation daily in the correct way for a few months to about a year. In our modern age, it may sound difficult to practise sitting meditation for an hour every day for a few months. It may sound like a huge commitment, but it isn't unreasonable when we compare this to other things we commit our time and energy to. For example, look at how much time we spend at the computer, on

our smart phone, or watching television. How much time do we spend immersed in forms of entertainment? If we knew how beautiful, how powerful and how rewarding the light really is, we may become much less interested wasting our time with the usual forms of entertainment and instead seek something more profound. Many of us do not know this is possible, so part of the purpose of this lesson is to awaken something deeper inside us to these possibilities.

There are several ways to achieve the light in one's own experience. Not only are there many ways to go about it, there are also various experiences of it, or placements of consciousness with regard to it. Some approaches with respect to the light are extremely beneficial and others waste a valuable opportunity. These are not easy things to explain; however, I'll do my best to describe some of the possibilities I have encountered.



Reiki and the Light



One simple way to achieve the light or at least get some experience of the light moving through the energy field is to learn Reiki. Many of my students are now Reiki practitioners. If we'd like to learn, then seek a good teacher. With Reiki we will automatically have experiences of light moving through our energy field and body. This will happen quite quickly, in the form of at least a few short and subtle experiences very early on, usually on the second day of the course.

To have more profound experiences of the light with Reiki we must practise very often, on ourself and on others. Naturally this light will move through us more often. This may happen if we are at Reiki level two or higher and we are able to complete four to six treatments in a day, like a Reiki marathon. If, during these treatments, we allow the Reiki to flow without worrying, being concerned or trying too much, by the end of the day when we lay down to relax, our entire body will appear to be flickering in and out of existence. It will appear as light. The solidity of the body may still be available if we pay attention to it, but the flickering lightness of the body is so powerful that it is more prevalent in our consciousness. The body's density appears less real, as the light and glowing of the energy field radiates. The physical body - as in the skin,

hands, feet and bones - gives us a very limited understanding of what the body truly is. The flickering of the body in and out of existence is far closer to the truth of what the body is than the simple description of flesh and bone.

The physical body is a delusion of consciousness. It is not as it appears to the senses, and it is not as it is remembered in our thoughts. The memory of the body's shapes and appearances is what's guiding us to believe the delusion that we are this body and not this light. With the experience of Reiki, we can sense the body is being filled with light energy. This is made possible by higher intelligence, who we can call guides or angels. They are beings whose energy is vibrating at a much higher frequency than us. Once we've learned Reiki and have been attuned, we have a clearer connection with them. We have these higher beings and frequencies working through our energy field and in some cases we can have the experience of what it might feel like to be a healing guide in a different realm. In fact, at the higher levels of Reiki, we spend time as healing guides ourself. If we spend a lot of time practising Reiki in this lifetime, it is likely upon the death of this body that we will be reborn in our next existence as a healing guide without a coarse physical body. We may only have a subtle or astral body.

This particular experience of the light is one where we can feel our energy field as light. We may be able to open up our consciousness to any vibration within our body and energy field. This is a wonderful exercise, to create the spark of light in the more sensitive areas, like the hands, feet and lips. We can continue to make that feeling more prevalent in other experiences too. When I speak to groups I often make the light vibration in the room stronger, so students can have a more profound experience of it than they usually would while trying alone.

In this case, we don't necessarily see the light but we sense the feeling of light moving through the energy field; we feel it vibrating at a higher level. There are also many experiences of seeing the light and working with the light that will help develop our own consciousness.

If we practice Reiki frequently, a simple way to achieve the light is to use the high vibrational energy field that we cultivate. This light, that is distributed across our energy field as a whole, can be gently guided if we have enough concentration on it, without being taken over by it, and without forcing or feeling greed or desire for it. We can gently steer it into a smaller area in front of our face. We can sense the light in this area and make it more concentrated and more powerful in front of the face to work with it. If we are enjoying it, and not

trying too hard, we may become concentrated enough to manipulate this light. We can make it smaller or larger. We can shape it into a sphere and send it to different locations and have higher experiences.

I have found Reiki to be the easiest way to achieve light, however, with Reiki it's harder to have control over the light. It's more difficult to use the light skillfully to develop the mind and consciousness. This is simply because it comes spontaneously, and we may not have developed other necessary skills like concentration so that our thoughts do not take us away.



Meditation: A More Effective Way

There are other ways we can achieve the light besides using a tremendous amount of Reiki. The next most common way we achieve the light is with a lot of meditation and concentration. Even when I say the next most common, it's not very common. A couple of hundred years ago and especially a couple of thousand years ago, it was much more common for meditators to achieve this light. It's rare in today's world to find a meditator or even a teacher who is able to achieve this light, because of the

reasons mentioned earlier.

When we use meditation, the access to the light may appear more difficult because we have to work at it, whereas with Reiki, it can come automatically when we place our hands in the various positions. In a sense, the practice of Reiki is easier than meditation because there's less intention and concentration. With Reiki, we simply place our hands and let the Reiki come through. With meditation, we are in the driver's seat and we have more power and control. It is harder to achieve but when we do, we can use the light more easily for whatever is required at the time.

When we use meditation to achieve the experience of the light, it won't appear as something overtaking the body or energy field. It can appear that way, but that's not usually the experience that we are looking for. There are higher experiences of the light. In meditation, what we're looking for in order to achieve the light is the experience of attaining a sphere of light that appears around the tip of, or right under the nose. It can become very big or small, and appears to be centered in this area. It is difficult to find people who can achieve this and speak about it from their experience. I am fortunate to have been able to experience this and to know some great masters in Thailand as they have helped guide me in developing these skills.

Chanting and the Light



The two most common ways to achieve the light in meditation are through breath awareness and chanting or repeating a phrase. The faithful Buddhists in Thailand use the chant Buddhō which means “awakened one”. They keep repeating it. When the mind is busy, they repeat it quickly, but not harshly. When the mind is calmer, they repeat it slowly with just the odd Buddhō every once in a while.

Some people prefer or need a longer chant because they like it, and it brings up beautiful feelings of faith, happiness and a connection with higher states or beings. This can happen across all religions, faiths and belief systems, including no belief system. The recitation can be, “May I be happy. May all beings be happy” or, “May we be free from suffering.” It could be anything at all, even something amusing if our consciousness enjoys it and can stay with it.

It could be something as ridiculous as “sandwich”. It could be the name of a loved one, as long as we don’t feel any pain with regards to the loved one. We can use the name of the loved one if it evokes feelings of joy and if our heart opens up when we say his or her name. Whatever it is we’re chanting, whether it’s the name of a person, an angel or a god, we should feel an affinity to them and

feel happy. When other thoughts come in, that's fine and natural, but we say the words over the thoughts. We allow the feeling of the word and the images associated with the word to be primary, more powerful and joyful than any other thoughts that come up. I can remember staying at a retreat and sometimes repeating, "LA LA LA LA....." in a loud and silly way in my head until I could gain some concentration.

We can repeat this chant until such a time when the mind automatically becomes completely interested in resting with our chosen word or phrase. We can't decide when this concentration happens. The images associated with the word may still come up but the mind doesn't pay any attention to them; the mind is completely happy and comfortable, joyful and restful with this one beautiful recitation. The word or phrase is our primary focus. We don't have any interest in becoming distracted by anything else. We feel restful with it. We repeat it and open our heart to it without getting bogged down with any thoughts that come up.

We don't get lost in, or angry with, whatever other thoughts arise. We know that we are thinking all day long, so of course thoughts will come up during meditation. It's natural. If we meditate for an hour and for the rest of the day we are freely thinking, it's natural that the thoughts will come up in mediation too. If we practise

meditation then we're teaching ourself a new habit. We're introducing this new habit to the mind, and showing it how joyful having a meditation object is. We're practising a new skill. As we continue to practice, the mind will see how beautiful this is and attend to the word and the feeling. We don't even get as distracted as we normally would by any beautiful images that appear in the mind's eye.

We have the experience of this chant or word and it becomes very calming. Eventually, we start to feel very bright. The light starts appearing around the chant, somewhere out in front of our face. The light will become very powerful especially if we continue with the recitation and don't pay much attention to the light. The light will start to prevail so much from our joy and our concentration on our word or phrase. The words begin to disappear on their own. This is because the chant becomes too harsh or coarse for the subtle level of the mind at this point. For this reason, the chant ceases. There still may be thought going on but it is slower, and the attention isn't completely on any thought. The attention becomes enamoured by the light that appears. When the light first appears, it is very active. It's moving like a fireball. It is quite dynamic.

This teaching in meditation is very advanced. It's not taught widely as there aren't many people who can

practise this way. This is a special lesson; I don't normally teach this. All of these lessons are more advanced than what we're able to accomplish at this time but it's awakening our heart to the possibilities.



The Breath and the Light



A third way we can achieve the light is by using the breath in mediation. The breath can achieve this same experience. The breath is already moving in and out by itself. Instead of this movement happening outside of our awareness, we become aware of the movement of the breath. We try not to interfere with it but being who we are, it's natural that we will try to control the breath once we notice it. Instead, we just notice that the body is breathing. At the beginning we will sense the breath as being quite long. As we continue noticing the movement of the breath naturally, our attention will get stronger. If we do this in a relaxed way, without any holding or forcing, the breath will start to become shorter and shorter.

Many people who do not have experience with any profound level of meditation tend to believe that the longer breath is more peaceful. This is not the

case. It's true that a long breath is more peaceful than the irregular and shallow breath associated with being completely stressed or angry. That type of short suppressive breath, however, is not happening when we are practising meditation. The longer breath is preferable to this stressful and short breath simply to help with relaxation.

Before this world became so busy and occupied, meditation wasn't simply practised to help with relaxing and calming us down. True meditation was originally intended to help us achieve higher states.

Meditation has become popular again due to our hectic lifestyles as a means to calm us down and bring health and balance to the body and emotions. Before our time, people lived in more natural environments with simpler, slower and healthier lifestyles. They would start their meditations at a level of deep relaxation; we could only strive to reach their start level in our practice!

Once we are feeling natural and calm, we can begin practising true meditation, the way meditation was intended before this busy society developed. If we practise correctly, we can achieve higher states.

When we move from this natural, calm state to a higher state, we watch the breath as it starts to get shorter. This is a sign that we are relaxing. Early in the meditation, the breath appears to move deep into the abdomen.

Then as we continue to observe it, it appears only to go as far as the chest. Next, the experience feels as if the breath goes into the throat and then back out the nostrils. As we get calmer, it feels as if it goes from the tip of the nostril into the nose and back out. Then it gets even shorter than this. The breath starts to feel beautiful and we feel so happy. Eventually, the breath becomes extremely short, where it can only be felt at the tip of the nostril. There is almost no breathing necessary. Light starts to appear.



When the Light Appears



As the breath gets so incredibly short, an extremely thin line, like a very fine string of breath comes in. This is all the breath that's required because the thoughts and the mind are so quiet. There's no restlessness of mind and the body is in equilibrium, so very little oxygen is required. The tiny string of breath turns to light. It moves from the experience of wind to the experience of pure light. When we breathe it in, it's as if we're bringing in a stream of light into our body. This feels incredibly rejuvenating and joyful.

It is easy to get distracted by this, but if we get too distracted by it we cannot develop further. We continue observing the movement of the breath getting smaller and finer. At some point, the breath will completely cease coming through the nostril.

I have had the experience of this progression of the light enough times to say that any of these stages can easily get skipped over in our perception. We may not notice each of these stages along the progression of the light because they are very subtle. I understand the order of their progression after having experiences and then reading about them. I personally have not gone through each stage, each time. The mind by-passes some and doesn't notice others. For completeness, however, I'm going through the order of things in great detail.

Eventually, the breath stops. It stops completely. At this point if there is still a sense of inward and outward movement where the breath was, we may feel that oxygen is now being taken in by our entire body, our pores instead of our nose. The amount of breath that is required is so fine and our concentration is so powerful, that even our pores are big enough spaces to directly let in what is required in the way of oxygen. The inward movement of the breath isn't coming into the nose anymore. When we are concentrated enough, the breath moves directly into the body without requiring the

use of the nose. Medical science does not know this, but it is common knowledge to meditation devotees.

The breath stops at the tip of the nose and breathing is now happening directly through the pores and the skin. We don't pay attention to the breathing now. As the breathing virtually stops, more and more light appears at the tip of the nose and becomes very obvious. We now pay attention to this light. There still may be some thought, but it is so minor and uninviting in comparison to this dynamic light. Because the breath has basically stopped, we no longer attend to it. We now attend to this light, burning bright like the sun.

This is the same dynamic light that I've described earlier. It can also come in through the recitation of a word or a phrase, or through a powerful amount of Reiki or healing light. We can reach the same dynamic and powerful light through all of these different paths. Once it's achieved, we have the ability to use this light, if we don't get too excited by it. Sometimes just getting excited the light has arrived, or one thought about how we want to tell our friends or our teacher, is enough to make it disappear. We would have to restart the process and it can be even harder the next time, when there is anticipation.



Mindfulness and the Light



If we've been practising a lot of mindfulness, which is the highest and most powerful thing we can practice, it can be used to enhance this experience. In fact, if we practise mindfulness particularly well on a given day by diligently watching the mind, body and emotions in a relaxed way, by the end of the day when we sit down to meditate, the light may already be present from our mindfulness practice. A high degree of concentration that we didn't know we had was already present from practising mindfulness all day and some dynamic light will already be there. If we can be mindful of the excitement, happiness or interest regarding it, without indulging in these things, the light will get even brighter. This is actually a fourth way to achieve this light, though it takes a great commitment to mindfulness, perhaps in a retreat setting or perhaps from practising slowly and steadily for years. This is the most dependable way to achieve light for highly mindful people. It is a trade secret.

The light achieved at this point from any of the four ways mentioned, will appear like a fireball: it's moving, bubbling and flickering like the sun. With mindfulness, we will not only see the light but we will even see the movement of thoughts coming in and disappearing very, very quickly. The movement of the thoughts is

actually one and the same as the movement of the light.

This dynamic light will feel more peaceful than anything we have experienced before, but we will notice that even this light is still not ultimately peaceful. It will appear as a busy light. When we continue to have our concentration on this light, and the concentration is powerful enough so that we don't get lost in the movement of the light, we may be able to achieve the experience where the light no longer has any movement at all. The light becomes completely still. The mind becomes completely still with the light as well. There will barely be any thought. Almost all thought is gone, as we have such control of the mind. We are now easily able to expand and reduce the size of this light. It's so pleasurable to be able to do this. With so much concentration on the light, there is rapture. It is a beautiful experience.

When we stop playing with it, have no distractions and have only a still and full focus on the light, thought ceases completely. The light becomes completely still. At this point we are considered to be in jhana, the deepest levels of concentration.



Jhana



There are eight levels of jhana and they are the deepest meditations. I won't go through all of these levels now as without the experience or practice, it will only be informational for us at this point. Even with all of my own experiences and my ability to guide you up to this point, I've only had six or seven experiences in various jhanas myself. These days that is considered quite exemplary, more than most lifelong practitioners can claim. This is how powerful and rare of a meditation it is. Even with all the great meditators in the world, there are perhaps only five or so people who are highly skilled in this practice and can enter the different levels of jhana at will. Then there are a handful or so who have had experiences of some of the jhanas here and there, and perhaps another handful or two that can experience only the still light of the first jhana.

I'm going to step back now from the still light to go back to the dynamic light. This is an area that isn't too hard for anyone to experience if we seek it out rather than seeking other types of entertainment. There is a good chance that there will be at least some experience of the light. We may be able to practise to the point where this dynamic light is in front of us and we're able to control it to a certain extent. This isn't jhana but it is very useful, bright and happy.



Entrance into the Heavens

This dynamic light acts as an entrance point into levels of the heavens. We can move into it or peer into it and see other realms and beings. The light acts as a flashlight, shining on other realms of existence for us. We are likely to see beings that we have an attachment to, or have faith in, at first.

In most religions, this would be the end of the potential for a human being. We would see the light, get a glimpse of a heaven, and know that heaven is real. Depending on what we are taught and what we resonate along with, a particular god or saviour may be seen, or mistaken for the light itself. This may validate and confirm our beliefs for us; however, it won't take us past the tip of our own nose! Most people stop there and become "believers", but we can move much higher than this light into the stillness of jhana.

Jhana is synonymous with the Brahma Lokas, or the abodes of the blissful deities. Available in these levels of jhana are rapture, serene bliss, psychic powers of godly proportions and complete alert awareness. We can have periods in there that seem like an eternity.

If we move it down a notch, to this powerful and vibrant light, then we can move into the levels of the heavens and see different guides, angels and gods.

Gods here are of the heavenly variety, still interested in the worlds of sense desire. They are below the deities that reside in jhana in the sense that they are still beings seeking pleasures through the senses, perhaps wanting a following, to help humanity and accomplish things. They are kings and queens of the heavens.

Heavens and their gods - what we know about them, what we have faith in or believe, what we have been told, and what we didn't even know existed - are all available to be seen through this light. The light acts as a window into these places.

If we still have enough concentration and the light appears in front of us, then we can get images of beings - perhaps angels. For people who practise Reiki, we may have very brief experiences of this light because there is a higher vibration flowing within us even without meditation. We may sometimes get a glimpse of a being presenting itself vibrating with this light. We may also see an angel or another heavenly being and view how it's working through us.

Our past lives, where we have been and what we've seen, may steer our experiences with the light in a certain direction. Sometimes we see what we have tremendous faith in because our heart or our consciousness guides us to it. Sometimes we see something new to us. In this light we may have a window into heavenly abodes, not just

the experience of an angel coming to us like when we practise Reiki, but we can also see their habitats. We don't get a chance to be one of them there but we can see their abodes as if we're peering over a fence. The possibilities of places and beings we may see are infinite with this light.

Rather than progressing to jhana, our concentration can lessen to the point where we get interested in one of these heavens. If it does, we can move closer to it. We can never actually be in it but we can be guided through it or have a closer look at some of the details. From a higher perspective, this actually happens when our concentration falters. We become enthralled with something rather than alert and poised: we see it, crave it, and we move towards it. We've lost our consciousness of the body and mind and we've lost our mindfulness. We get interested and enamoured, and then explore other places through the power of this light. This is how it happens.

We can have some nice experiences, but once we regain our concentration, we can decide not to go through these levels of heaven and stay alert instead. In some cases, we may have a clear vision of a being in whom we have tremendous faith: a god, saviour, prophet, sage or saint. If we are skilled at working with the light, we can have a clear intention of who or what we would like to

experience. The light will shine in that direction for us to see, acting like a spotlight into other realms.

In a higher meditation, we still have the light available, but we are not so enamoured by it. We just have our concentration with it and we can move into jhana and the higher levels of concentration. It is at these levels where spiritual powers are available, like the divine eye, clairvoyance and clairsaudience that come as a more permanent and dependable measure, not just as the odd flicker of psychic experiences. We can know the timeline of others' past lives and where the deceased have gone. These can become firmly established skills from now onward. These are called abhiñña and are available in these jhana levels.

Once we are in the jhana levels there is no more thought. Once we are past the first level of jhana and into the higher levels, there is no more light. The light now disappears and there is pure concentration. We've gone beyond the light.

When we have a background in understanding these levels of meditation, we can see that each corresponds to a different level or vibration of god, angel or deity. The varied states of happiness and calmness at different levels are their respective abodes.

It's the breath that can most readily take us from the first experience all the way to the end, if we can resist

becoming too enamoured by the amazing and wonderful experiences along the progression. What usually happens instead is we get enamoured by the light, by beings or by heavens. It is an enjoyable stage in meditation, but after a while hopefully we work to develop past that. For those of us seeking enlightenment, it is advised to stay alert and don't fall under the allure of the light if it appears.

When we first achieve new states we usually get enamored by them. We may be well on our way to paradise itself, but then we see a sign post that says, "Disneyworld is this way!". Instead of continuing in the right direction, we take the turnoff. The danger is if we enjoy our amusement park too much we may become addicted to it and never be able to leave it. We may mistakenly consider it the best and highest experience and then become a teacher of that experience. We may never get back on track.

There are so many people who have had wonderful experiences of a heaven. Sometimes it happens from a coma, or with an out of body experience. Some lift out of the body and see things in different realms. They get totally enamoured by this and don't move past it. They believe it is the highest experience of truth and write books and teach about it. It is inspiring no doubt, but we must always be skeptical when they claim or imply that this is

the highest experience or the correct direction for all.

It is a truth along the way; that's all. It is a lovely and rewarding amusement park along the way but our human potential is far greater than that. It's wonderful to experience these things and learn and be inspired by these teachers but we shouldn't believe that what they are talking about is the highest potential of the human mind. Some of it becomes a huge distraction to us. Some of it is so addictive that we get stuck and can't move higher and reach our full potential.





The Shining Light of Mindfulness

Concentration is an essential aspect that can take us to our highest potential. It will bring us to the light and then past the light. Even more significant than concentration, the most important aspect, is mindfulness. Mindfulness is not concentration. It's something other than a calm, focused mind. It is essential to learn and it is what I teach primarily. Even having the opportunity to be exposed to mindfulness and to learn mindfulness is an amazing gift in one's life and in one's journey. It is very special to arrive at the point where we have an interest in mindfulness.

Along our journey, there will be an interest in the light and I highly recommend it as an important part of our development. Some of us sense that mindfulness is more important. Those of us who do, are the ones whose consciousness is even more highly evolved. When we are interested in mindfulness, we can see any beautiful experience, even the experience of the light and the heavens, as merely happy and beautiful experiences. We can talk about them, teach about them, but we will see that these are only experiences. They fade.

If we're only interested in the light and angels, we can no doubt have rewarding experiences. However, when difficulties happen, we are not self-reliant. We suffer and struggle when those beings can't help us.

We haven't learned to be our own refuge. We are weak. We see clearly that even though we have wonderful experiences and we're able to feel tremendous joy on and off, we still haven't dealt with the suffering that's in our heart. We've just found more nice places to play and help friends.

A mindfulness practitioner with powerful understanding and wisdom, will even see some angels as merely happy pleasure seekers. If these angels aren't practising mindfulness, and many do, they can be helpful but not completely reliable. They are absorbed in the pleasures of the heavens and are seen by enlightened beings as somewhat childish. They are beautiful and wonderful beings just like children, but they are still not willing to grow up or develop further. Many angels can be seen as not highly developed from the perspective of one with true mindfulness and wisdom.

Of course, from the perspective of angels or humans who have only been exposed to widely known religious teachings, the belief is that experiencing the light, love and protection of gods or higher deities, are the highest experiences possible. The goal may then be to become an angel close to whomever they worship. There's a lot of movement towards goodness on this route, which is wonderful, but all the pain and sorrow in our heart is merely subdued for a while. It doesn't

get dealt with or worked through. In a sense, we just create intricate ways of avoiding the suffering in our heart.

According to most religions, the most we can achieve spiritually as a human is an experience of the light or an experience of a heavenly being residing in the light. This validates a truth that, yes, this god or these angels exist. Then follows the assumption that this is the highest truth. The assumption could also conclude that our religion is the right one and the others are wrong, exhibiting a narrowing of the mind. Another possible scenario could be, that we see a figure from another religion in the light, and then change religions in accordance with our experience. We may have been Jewish and through meditation or concentrated prayer, we see the light and an image of Jesus. We then become “born again” or join a group like Jews for Jesus.

Whatever we experience within the light can cause us to mistakenly believe that this experience is the highest and only truth. I must warn against taking any vision or extraordinary experience that can happen in the light, to be the only truth, the only god, the only salvation or the only path to heaven. I must also warn against believing that the heavens are the highest potential for us with respect to future lifetimes.



Meditative Experiences



There are also many more amazing meditative experiences. For example, some of us may be interested in the fact that the breath can actually stop. This is why we may have heard of meditators who have been discovered in a cave or under a tree for months with a huge long beard, alive, without any food, drink or breath. There is one such meditator well known in India at the moment. He takes his energy from the sun. I can say genuinely that this is possible because I have personally experienced no breathing at times during meditation and have had many hours with no interest in the body and its functions. The body is able to sustain itself. This deep state of meditation did not continue for weeks or months but from my experience over many, many hours, I can say this experience of not breathing could continue for longer periods because there isn't any energy loss. Everything seems to slow to a halt.

There are people that I know who have spent weeks at a time in and out of meditation, not eating, and only consuming water. They don't require eating. They only drink water. They sit from sunrise to sunset, from beginning to end, gazing at the sun and breathing in the sun. This gives them enough energy to complete their tasks. I assume they are not working. We usually

need food if we're working because being in a body and maintaining our harsh lifestyle requires food. They live off the sun, Reiki and water. This is a possibility for us, but I wouldn't recommend it unless we have no responsibilities at the time, and practise plenty of quality meditation.



Formless Jhanas



In the formless levels of jhana (5th to 8th) there is no experience of the body. There is still a body visible to onlookers, but the consciousness is so concentrated on powerful states that there is no experience of the body. The body doesn't require anything during such a period. Even the heart beats extremely slow.

As for the states of mind in the formless jhanas, the consciousness that prevails is an infinite space, infinite consciousness, or infinite nothingness. Each are different experiences and correspond to different godly realms. When we understand these levels of meditation, for the short period of time that we are practising them, we are experiencing what it's like to be a god. We may not have accumulated the perfections to be able to sustain the experience or the perfections to have power within

the experience to create, but we can experience the god-like state for a short period. We can also achieve psychic powers from here.



Other Ways to the Light



I mentioned there are other ways to achieve the light. One way is through our imagination. We can contemplate one of the Earth elements, for example, water. We can contemplate a sphere of water and the beauty, coolness and purity of water in front of our mind. If our concentration and enjoyment of the water becomes powerful enough, the water can become the dynamic light that I explained. From there we can move onward to peer into the heavens, or go beyond that into jhana. This can also be done with the wind, earth and fire elements. In this way we use the imagination and bring up the feeling of the connection with this element.

We could also imagine a colour, and bring a sphere of colour in front of us, using our imagination. If we can draw in the energy of that colour and become totally concentrated and joyful with that colour, then it can also become the dynamic light. This practice is called kasina. In the communities of higher levels of meditation

there are many people who use kasina, like the fire kasina, to penetrate the body and move deeper. The fire is so powerful in their mind that they can actually burn their body, not physically, but burn their skin off in their mental experience. All that's left are the bones. In doing this they are contemplating the impermanence of the body. They burn the bones away to ash until all that's left is light or pure awareness. They can develop further from there. There are many different experiences available. It feels endless.



This gives us a window into some very small communities of powerful meditators who are still left on Earth. It's a true joy to be able to share my own experiences and those from the great masters. It's a joy to know some meditators who truly understand the value of meditation as something essential for our development, instead of merely cycling around from one lifetime to another as humans, animals and if we're really good and generous, angels, and then back around.

More and more people these days, though still relatively few, are looking to have higher experiences and move closer and closer to the highest in human potential.

It is an honour to be able to share what's possible for us in this life. Even as busy people, we have ways to slowly and comfortably work towards some of these

experiences. Some of us may have had glimpses of the light because we've already practised these skills in past lives and there's a yearning to develop them further. We wouldn't be here learning this now if there wasn't a longing in our hearts. I feel very blessed to have such beautiful beings, beautiful students, learning and growing along with me.





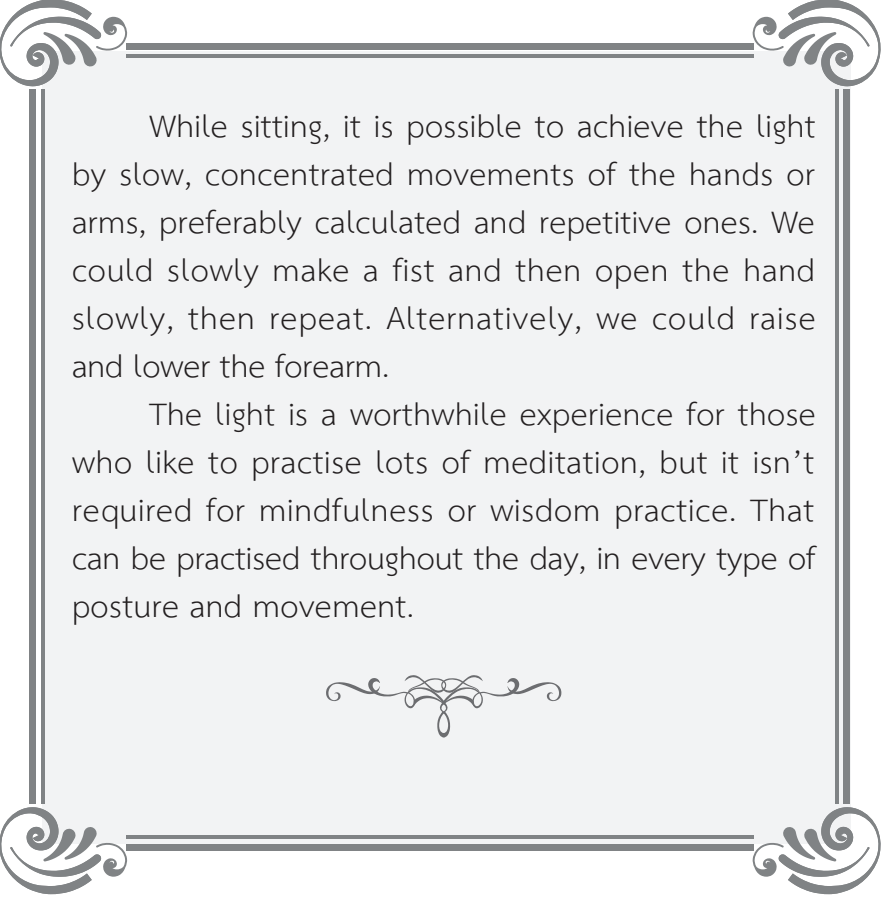


I find I get very itchy or sleepy or painfully stiff during sitting meditation and prefer to watch my body moving. Is there a way to achieve the light with walking meditation or a movement based type of meditation?

It's great that we know true practice doesn't need to happen while we're sitting still, and that the correct practice can be done walking or standing or watching the body move.


Unfortunately, the odds of being able to achieve the light while sitting are much greater than while standing. If someone is easily bothered by itchiness and numbness, then they have no chance at achieving the light. Succumbing to these small irritants indicates the mind is too busy in its habits and patterns of needing comfort and fixing problems. It's indicative of a restless mind. Worry and restlessness are a hindrance to meditation that must be seen and naturally liberated for something as still and peaceful for the light to arise. With that said, we should find a comfortable position in which to sit if we wish to practise meditation to achieve the light.





While sitting, it is possible to achieve the light by slow, concentrated movements of the hands or arms, preferably calculated and repetitive ones. We could slowly make a fist and then open the hand slowly, then repeat. Alternatively, we could raise and lower the forearm.

The light is a worthwhile experience for those who like to practise lots of meditation, but it isn't required for mindfulness or wisdom practice. That can be practised throughout the day, in every type of posture and movement.



“ Once our evolution has become a conscious one, developments that would have taken thousands of years are reduced to mere moments. ”

Chapter 6



A Conscious Evolution

We live in a modern age with so many promises of how easy life is supposed to be. We have our new technology, higher education, and we are more refined. We live the way kings and queens did in the old days, having decorated homes with multiple rooms, sitting up on big chairs and laying on elevated beds. There isn't a single meal where we have to worry about going out to hunt, or how the harvest will be this year. We're living in a world with so many conveniences. We can get loans and spend more money than we have. We can do all kinds of wonderful things now. We are very fortunate. We have people to tend to our children and our gardens, our trash is expected to disappear weekly, and we have machines to wash our clothes and dishes. We really are living with privilege. Yet, there's still something missing, isn't there?

No matter what standard of living we've been able to achieve, we constantly feel like there's something lacking. We still feel we need to accomplish one or two more things before we can be happy, at peace or fulfilled. Whether we look at ourselves as a society that's

growing and advancing, or as an individual with personal goals to achieve, there is always a sense of not quite having made it.

Humanity has been evolving for a very, very long time, for hundreds of thousands of years. Now there's a need for another kind of evolution, a conscious evolution.

We've been evolving unconsciously all this time. Up until now, we haven't evolved with intent. It just happened on its own. What has happened recently is we've come to a place where we are putting the Earth in jeopardy. The reason we are doing this is pretty simple. We haven't evolved consciously enough, and our Earth can't accommodate our unconscious evolution anymore. I'll explain what I mean.

We humans are doing a lot of things that are affecting the Earth. Entire species are being lost in the process. With all of the pain that we've caused nature, the forests, animals and each other, with war and conflict, crude and palm oil production, cow farming and other destructive business and political practices, we haven't found a way to reach any sort of peace. We haven't found any sort of fulfilment. We constantly move forward, and yet we think more is needed.

As individuals we believe we need to acquire more. As a country and even as a planet, we are always looking to gain, to expand or to improve. We continue

to want. The reason we continue this is because it's a mentality. The reason we haven't stopped working in this way, which continues to cause pain for many species and humans, is simply because we are not evolving consciously. We're keeping the same mental patterns we've had since our tribal days of hunting for food. We have the same mental attitudes, like the need to acquire more. We used to have legitimate primal fears of being killed by wild animals or natural forces. We have cleverly eliminated many of these threats from our habitats, but we haven't evolved from having fears. Our fears have shifted to psychological issues. Instead of fearing a predator, we are afraid of being attacked verbally. Instead of fearing starvation, we fear the food won't taste as good as it did at another restaurant. Instead of fearing the wind will blow our shelter away and our fire out, we fear our financial position will decline or our credit card number and passwords will be stolen.

We have these mental patterns that continue. We have desires to acquire more and fears that we're going to be threatened by people and circumstances. Until now, we haven't evolved past these things.

What some of us are starting to do is realize that we must evolve consciously. This means learning to observe ourselves and to develop our own mind. We are putting our own mind on a path where we can achieve peace

and fulfilment, independent of what the world says about us. We can be at peace, independent of goals that we've set in the outside world, like a degree, a promotion, or a certain job. We can be independent of how we see ourselves, how people see us, who likes us, who does not or whatever else may be happening outside of ourselves. We're moving towards evolving mentally and emotionally, meaning we are learning to be fulfilled, complete and peaceful even when suffering is all around us.

It starts with learning to awaken out of our old mental patterns. Many of these patterns aren't as personal as we may think. They are cultural and sociological patterns of people as a whole. We start to awaken out of our social culture. We are learning to become aware of the way in which these patterns work and we are waking up out of these patterns.

To wake up out of old mental patterns, we need to recognize that we are in them, while we are in them. We realize that when we are in negative mental patterns, we are causing our own pain. Our pain is not caused from the people and circumstances we are thinking about. Our pain is coming from the negative thinking we are engaged in with regards to our world.

We have to start accepting responsibility for our own pain. We must realize it's our own mental patterns that

are causing us to suffer. Sure there are negative circumstances. This person doesn't act like we want him to, and we wish he would change. Our work situation isn't ideal, and we wish it would improve. Hasn't it always been like this, in some way or another? Ever since childhood, there were always situations and people that weren't exactly the way we wanted them to be. It is impossible for the world to be in a state that is soothing and perfect for us all the time. The world is the way it is and can't conform to our every desire. That is the present reality. To gain peace, we should work on our own mental patterns and the way we respond and react to the world.

It's so simple and obvious to see where the problem actually is: we are our own problem. We have to realize this first. Once we do, then we can start to look at our own mental patterns. We'll see that when a person in our life is acting in a way that we don't like, we want to argue and fight. All of this conflict and negativity is going on in our own mentality, and then sometimes we may want to react in a harmful way. Now that we are growing consciously, instead of being a slave to an impulsive negative reaction, we have a look. We notice the reaction that goes on inside of us as a result of the external event. This reaction is the problem. The reaction is the pain. The pain is not what the others

say or do. The pain is here inside ourself, in what we think and feel as a reaction to what they say or do. Once the pain is here, we can see it as the result of our mental patterns, and have an opportunity to wake up from them, and become more kind, compassionate and wise.



Forgiveness



With so much ongoing war and human conflict in our world, it is obvious that we humans are carrying a lot of pain. If we look at history, we see the same tribal conflicts continue today, only with updated weapons. If we want peace, we must wake up out of our old patterns and do something new. We must learn to forgive. Forgiveness has been widely misunderstood. Once we really understand forgiveness, it becomes apparent why it's an essential aspect of our conscious evolution.

When we forgive, we don't sponsor the person's hurtful actions.

In that sentence lies all the answers we need regarding forgiveness. We can see that we are not supporting or condoning what someone did. Forgiveness is not about saying that whatever we are disliking or holding a grudge

against is now okay. That's not what we're doing. Forgiveness isn't about declaring someone's actions are no longer bad actions, or that we were wrong and they were right. Forgiveness is certainly not about letting them feel that what they did was acceptable if it wasn't.

What we're doing is sensing what is holding the grudge, what is holding the non-forgiveness, or even holding to a strong opinion. The strong opinion is at the root of non-forgiveness. Whether we believe that opinion to be right or not, is irrelevant. It is still holding to an opinion, such as, "That shouldn't have happened the way it did," or "They shouldn't have done this or that," or "It was terrible," or "I am a victim," or whatever other opinion it might be. When we hold to a strong opinion like this, we hold resentment and anger in our heart. We are totally focused on and concerning ourself with a story, and saying what they did was wrong. Instead of being caught up with the specifics of a story, let's have a look at how resentment really feels. How does anger feel? How does defining oneself by other people's actions feel? How does holding a strong conviction feel? Regardless of whether the story we tell ourself is true or not, how does it truly feel in our heart when we say, "I am right and they are wrong."

In comparison, how does it feel in the heart and in our energy field, when there is no anger, when there is no resentment, when there is no grudge? Never mind the stories. How does it feel to be free of any angst in the heart?

The only consequence that the thoughts and the pains can imagine is that the perpetrators, or the ones who have wronged us, don't deserve our forgiveness. When we look deeper, what don't they deserve? They don't deserve us to feel light and free? We mistakenly believe that if we hold a grudge against people that they can't be happy. In truth, we are the ones that can't be happy. We are the ones carrying the weight of it in our chest.

We feel that if we let go or if we forgive, that we are foolish. We mistakenly believe that we are allowing someone to be free of punishment or to be treated undeservedly well. We feel we would lose what we have over them. We may feel that forgiveness would be giving others power or permission to treat people badly, yet without forgiveness, we are the one treating ourself badly. We are punishing our own heart: confining it, suppressing it, denying it, closing it.

It is impossible to hold emotional pain anywhere outside of our own heart. Isn't that true? Where else would we be holding it? When we hold pain in our heart, we are giving ourselves pain. We fear that if I forgive,

that means I don't care about what they did, that I could make the same mistake again, or that I am vulnerable. If we are especially self-righteous, we may think that if we forgive them, they won't learn their lesson. We believe that if we remove the imagined shackles we've put on them, that they will run loose and continue to be harmful. We believe that they won't learn. We believe deep down that, "I'm vulnerable. If I forgive, I will get hurt again."

When we see clearly, such ideas seem preposterous. I hope we are starting to sense this now. As soon as we forgive, our heart is released from a heavy burden. It is light and open and isn't holding anger or resentment. Yet we somehow think that if we hold unnecessary pain, it will help us to not feel pain. Can we see how ridiculous this is?

Once we forgive, we don't become unwise. In fact, quite the opposite: we are wise. The bravest heart is the vulnerable one, the one that is open and not afraid to feel anything. A heart like that is not radiating with the energy of "hurt me". It is just the opposite. It's extremely powerful. When we forgive, the other person doesn't even have to know. Forgiveness is inner work. It happens in our own heart. We can still choose not to associate with or support those whom we believe have caused harm or those we have had problems with. The external aspects

are irrelevant. Are we seeing this now?

Forgiveness is our own spiritual work, for our own evolution. We don't become weak. It is the opposite. We become quite aware which situations are favourable and which are not. We also become more aware and intuitive about people and situations, and whether or not they are worthy of our involvement. Our heart is open, ready and wise. It understands that sometimes there are positive feelings and sometimes there are negative feelings, but we don't need to pre-emptively close our heart and not allow it to feel anything, just in case we may feel something negative. Attempting to protect oneself by closing our mind and heart off to any feeling is a painful way of being.

An example of this painful way of being is reminding ourself of the suffering that certain people have caused us. If we were in a difficult relationship and it ended very painfully, some may think the appropriate thing to do is to bring up the negative stories, to keep negative feelings towards our former partner, so that we will remain strong and hold to our decision. Some people may even keep reminding themselves over and over of how much they dislike their former partner.

It is far healthier to be as open and honest with one's own heart as possible. For example, it is perfectly okay to love someone who has hurt us. It is perfectly okay to

love someone who we will never see again. We just have to be brave enough to allow these feelings to pass through. They come and go, just like every feeling does. If we haven't opened up our heart to our own feelings, then we will misunderstand the transient, true nature of them. We will fear sadness, fear loneliness, fear a broken heart, and fear that if these feelings arise, they will stay.



True Love



When we speak of love, a pure love, we could ask: Could the purest love radiate from a place of fear, where we need things and people to be a certain way and stay that way? Let's take a moment to ponder that.

Or, would the purest love allow people and situations their freedom?

Would a true and pure love hold on and cling to the objects and people it loves, and try to make them be the way that we want them? Would a true love be acting from there? Of course not. The purest form of love is synonymous with freedom.

Developing this love, we must start with ourselves. We can't release others from the grips of our clingy and demanding type of love, if we can't release ourselves

from the same. When there's an emotion, a negative emotion for example, that arises in our heart, can we give it freedom? Do we have to fight against it and try to change it? Do we have to make stories in our mind, either good ones or bad ones, about why it's important to have this feeling, rationalizing it, or about why we shouldn't have a feeling? Do we need to talk to the feeling about how it shouldn't be there, or comically deny to ourselves that we even have it? All these antics are coming from impurities in the heart. Instead, can we just allow a feeling to be good or bad without needing to keep it or push it away? Can we let it come and let it go without getting in the way?

If we're able to allow the breath to just breathe; if we're able to allow the emotions to just come and go without interfering with them in any way, we'll get a sense of what love is about. We will likely get our first sense of what love is about by seeing the opposite of love, by seeing interference, by seeing our struggle in trying to change things. We will see that this desire to control things is impure, and doesn't come from true love.

In order for us to consciously evolve, we must practise true love, or allow our heart to open enough to allow true love to enter. I'm talking about a love that is much deeper than the love of fairy tales in books, television, movies, and of our lives. When we're coming from a place

of true love, it is more aligned with universal love or loving-kindness. It radiates naturally and effortlessly from beings who are in a state of full acceptance in any given moment. It isn't picking who to love or what to love. It isn't saying it loves happiness and hates unhappiness; it's equally nurturing to both.

As the saying goes, "As within, so without." This means the way we treat ourself internally will spill out into the world around us. For example, if we have self-loathing issues and are disliking things about ourself, then it will be very easy to slip into a negative perspective regarding our immediate environment, the world and the people in it. We will be angry with or hold a grudge against someone or something. However, if our inner state is one of accepting whatever feelings and mental behaviours arise within us, then we will automatically be accepting of others. Nice people, mean people, easy-going or difficult people, true love flows equally in all directions; it isn't picky or choosy to one's particular likes or dislikes. This is the purest kind of love that radiates all by itself when our consciousness isn't at odds with our own body and mind.

Let's see if we can sense in ourselves right now, the slightest feeling of being at odds with something. Perhaps we are being impatient while reading or listening, possibly with the teachings or even with ourself for

not absorbing them as well as we'd like to. Perhaps, we have confusion, frustration, sadness, or boredom. Then we may be able to sense that there is resistance or aversion to this mental state. The body may be uncomfortable. We may have a feeling that we don't want something to feel the way it does right now. If we can detect such subtleties within ourself, then we're coming to see what has been the main cause of our struggle in life. Aversion is a very important phenomenon to get to know. It's important to see this phenomenon come and go when it does. It is the opposite of love.

The word *metta* in Pali, the Buddhist language, means loving-kindness or universal love. Sometimes it is simply called "friendliness" because there's a friendliness towards all things, situations, and people, with no aversion. It's a very different choice of wording than the word *love*. In the time of the Buddha in India, they used the word *rakha* to mean love between two people, in the conventional way we think of love, and used the word *metta* to describe the loving-kindness that moves in all directions.

In some ways, these two kinds of love are complete opposites. The love that we feel for people can be felt at two levels. One is this pure love, which doesn't care how people are behaving. It has no resistance. Then there's this *rakha*, or conventional love. In Pali, the word *rakha* also means craving. Craving and conventional

love are synonymous. In the Thai language, the word *rakh* is used for conventional love, by just shortening the Indian word for love and craving. This love based on craving and attachment can never fulfill us. It's only pure love or metta that gives us the opportunity for true fulfilment. When people in the world don't need to be in a particular state or situation to our satisfaction in order to find peace, then love emanates effortlessly. We are in harmony with the world.

An analogy is the unconditioned love of a new born child by its mother. At first, the mom wants nothing from the child and is just happy this baby is alive. This is metta in the direction of the child. The love has no conditions; dirty diapers and ruining the new sofa with vomit stains have no diminishing affect. Then as the child grows older, the mother's happiness becomes invested in the child's behaviours and successes. The love has turned to conventional love, entangled in craving. Just her child being alive isn't sufficient to satisfy her anymore. True metta is the love of a mother for her new born child, expanded in all directions to every living being.

Things ultimately have no possibility of staying the way we like them to be. If we can be at peace with that, then metta will flow naturally. This is the type of love that we aim for. This is the worthy type of love that heals, builds bridges and creates a better world.

I had a student who said, “So wait a minute, when you don’t really care whether things go your way, that’s when they finally go your way? That’s not fair!” This was an amusing thought! Let me rephrase that in a useful way for everyone. A huge portion of our suffering is because of our demands on the world. We suffer because we aren’t at peace with how we are, how others are and how the world is. When we see that this ever-changing world is not the cause of our suffering, but that in reality, our demands are where the pain is, we start to become more alert and aware when our demands resurface. We see it as our personal suffering. We see a demand come and go, we see another demand come and go, and another: a demand for this itch to go away, for this thirst to go away, for this person to act a certain way, for this emotion to be different, for sleepiness to go away, for the headache to be gone, for the stomach ache... demands, demands! When we become alert, we see one demand after the next. We start to see that the demands are the cause of suffering itself. When we truly see this, we are on the path to freedom. All the demands on the body and its health, on emotions, and the world and everybody in it, are extinguished. That’s the end of suffering. No matter what state the body or emotions are in, no matter what state the world is in, we are free and totally at peace. A happiness and

a true love is all that remains because there is complete purity.

True love doesn't need to come from any particular person and be directed at us. As well, true love doesn't need to be directed by us to a particular person. True love is something that is cultivated and radiates from within ourselves in all directions. It does not rely on anyone or anything.



Awakening is the essential first step. Then the real work begins.

Self-Awareness



If we want to evolve consciously, we need to spend time being self-aware. When we spend enough time being aware and truly mindful of ourself, we start to learn the true nature of reality. Through self-awareness, we grow in our understanding of the way things are. One of the things we will start to see is that there isn't any particular state that is able to sustain itself. All states including the physical, emotional, and mental are in motion. They are all in a state of flux. There isn't any particular good or bad state that can stay with us.

We often make decisions based on the ridiculous notion that feelings stay; that they don't pass. The most important thing we can learn and know, is that all things pass. We can watch that happen right now. Every thought that comes is going. Every emotion that is here now, right in the center of the chest, is one that wasn't here a few moments ago. The position the body is in now, wasn't the position a few moments ago and won't be the one that's there in a few moments from now. Everything comes and goes. Nothing in existence has the power to remain the same.

At first this may sound upsetting but it's actually what our ultimate freedom comes from. It comes from seeing this truth, experiencing this truth, and finally allowing this reality to be just as it is. We struggle in life and create pain for ourselves because we are not willing to let things change as they do.

We struggle because we don't yet understand, that whatever is here now is going to change. It could get better, and it could get worse. It's almost certain to do both. The pain or true struggle comes from a lack of understanding of the temporary nature of what is weighing upon our heart at any given time. In allowing it to move, shift, change and pass, there is freedom.

There is a sublime comfort and peace from allowing whatever is, to be exactly as it is. The only way we can

do this is if we understand its true nature. This sentence may sound familiar as there are many spiritual teachers in the West that say similar things. There is an important difference, however. Many spiritual teachers have the acceptance part right, but they are missing the how-to.

The entire path for those drawn to enlightenment is about reaching this stage of full acceptance. Enlightenment happens from there. Genuine and sustained acceptance is not a meditative state. It can't be induced. It comes naturally in a process of mindfulness and understanding. We can hold our attention still or at a distance and pretend that we are in acceptance, but we are not. We can move our attention very deep into spacious places and even deep into awareness, but that is not acceptance either. It is avoiding suffering, not accepting it.

Many teachers, though admittedly very talented meditators, lack the wisdom that the Buddha taught. They don't fully grasp what the Buddha taught. Being aware of the moment isn't deciding that the truth of the moment is empty and then holding attention there. Life is not still. Life is moving and changing in every moment. The only way to true enlightenment is to become aware of the suffering and impermanent nature of things, not look for a peaceful place in the mind, prefer it stay there and call it who "I am". Even if that peaceful place is pure awareness, separate from

the body and mental formations, the experience of it still comes and goes if we are not interfering, doesn't it?

The Buddha said to practice to see directly that there are no phenomena of body or mind that are able to persist. We can't control them. We are not them. They cannot satisfy us because they cannot stay. When this is understood through direct experience, we are freed from requiring any particular state.

The only way we can achieve this is to become genuinely mindful. We can never gain this understanding through thought. We can never gain this understanding if we only see our emotional state as a concept, busy thinking about our feelings and not allowing ourself to experience them. Let's see the anxiety, restlessness, and uncertainty that fuel the complaints and unhappy stories we tell ourself. When we truly feel, we will notice movement and sensations below the neck: there will be pushing, pulling, squeezing, holding. We will see that greed really does feel sticky, and that anger really does feel hot!

One of the things I'm here to teach people is to wake up to what's going on in their own energy field, in their own consciousness. These are thoughts, emotions, the physical body, sensations and attention. All of these are happening within us and what we call ourself. The amazing fact is that we don't need to change the

way we think. We don't need to change the way we react. The truth is, we don't need to change anything. We just need to start waking up to the way things actually are. When we start to see our own thoughts and emotions arising in real time, we no longer become the slave to, and victim of, our own patterns, pains, thoughts, emotions, body and sensations. The awareness and receiving of the correct teachings are enough. We don't have to change the way we feel. What a relief!

We're not changing the way we react internally to a situation. Let's not touch that. It's the universe doing what it does. There isn't even a separate person doing anything. That is our grand delusion. There's an endless stream of thoughts going on. We didn't decide that they were going to come up. The next thing that we will think about wasn't chosen. It just came up. Why? Because of a set of conditions. We read this, we're taught that and we have been raised in certain ways. Then thoughts appear in the mind, from studies, reading, television, parents and even from past life conditioning. The thoughts just appear. We do not make them happen. They are totally out of our control. That's just the way it is. We recognize that, not as an idea or a concept, but in our actual experience by having a look at what's going on. That's what we're doing. There is so much peace in that. Peace is not in trying to stop the thinking, but in

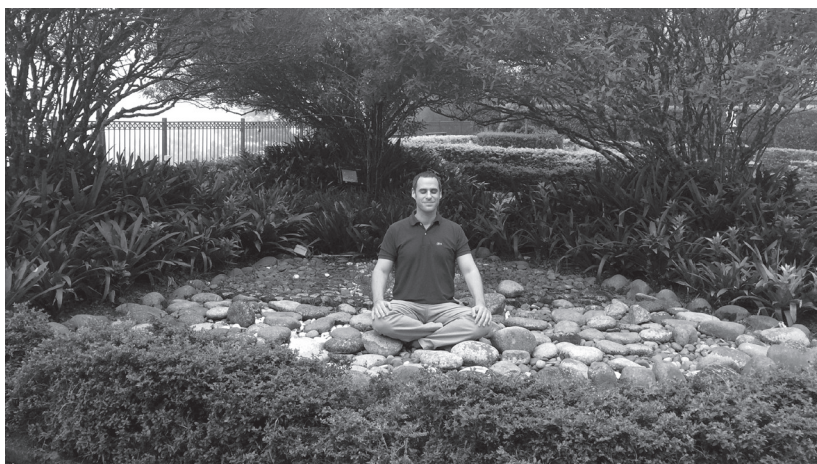
not owning it.



In periods when the mind is awake and aware, we will realize the truth about the way things are. We will realize that everything that arises falls away. Every emotion and every thought will come up and fall away. We will start to drop our attachment to our own ideas, our own emotions and will no longer deliberately fabricate elaborate stories about the past and future. We will be able to readily respond to people and situations from a considerably more peaceful and efficient place.

The real spiritual work is practising mindfulness during the day. That's where the problems and life situations happen, and it's where we really need to become aware. Formal mediation brings energy and consistency into our practice and reminds us of our intent for the day. Meditation can also can be a conduit to powerful spiritual experiences. Meditation is a complement to mindfulness practice and not the practice itself.

We don't need to take my word for any of this. Let's practise and see for ourselves. Whatever thought that is in the mind now, is a different thought than what was there a moment ago. Whatever emotion that's in the heart now has the quality of passing away in a moment's time. With these insights comes great power. We're not afraid of the world anymore. We're not afraid of anything

that could potentially make us feel bad, sad or frustrated. We're not even afraid of boredom. Yes, boredom: one of the most powerful and uncomfortable emotions, yet so underestimated because it's quickly thwarted by activity and entertainment. The awareness I'm talking about doesn't even need to be sustained. That's too unnatural. We gradually start to evolve consciously, by becoming aware of our own body, mind and heart. This is the path that sets us free.





You talk about what we can do to evolve consciously on a personal level. How can this benefit society as a whole?



What is society other than people? When people evolve, their interactions evolve. Of course, not everyone will be interested in evolving consciously. I can say this: just one highly conscious person can make up for thousands who are in the general location of that person's energy field. It doesn't take many awakened minds to balance the scale as they are much more powerful than negativity. In some of the ailing parts of society, like politics, declining ethics in media and journalism and toxic corporations, all it takes is a few enlightened minds in places of power and influence to change it all for the better. Mindfulness is like a light being turned on in a room. It shines into darkness and darkness has no chance of surviving. The whole room illuminates.





How can we not feel like a victim?

One way is when we understand the consequences of our actions and start to take responsibility for them. Everything that happens to us is taking place because of a long succession of causes and effects. We have no control over what we have done in our past lives and how it effects this life. If we are aware and astute in being harmless from now on, there will be a reduction in the amount of negative consequences for us. Each time we experience a negative karmic result in our current life, it means one more inevitable repercussion just got burned up. There are less left.

Another way we can move out of the victim consciousness is when we see the importance of mindfulness. Then we see everything that arises as an opportunity for mindfulness. When someone behaves badly toward us, or if we think about the past and we feel negatively about it, we get to see our past within ourself; namely, the painful feeling or stuck emotion that remains. It wouldn't come up if it wasn't part of our consciousness.





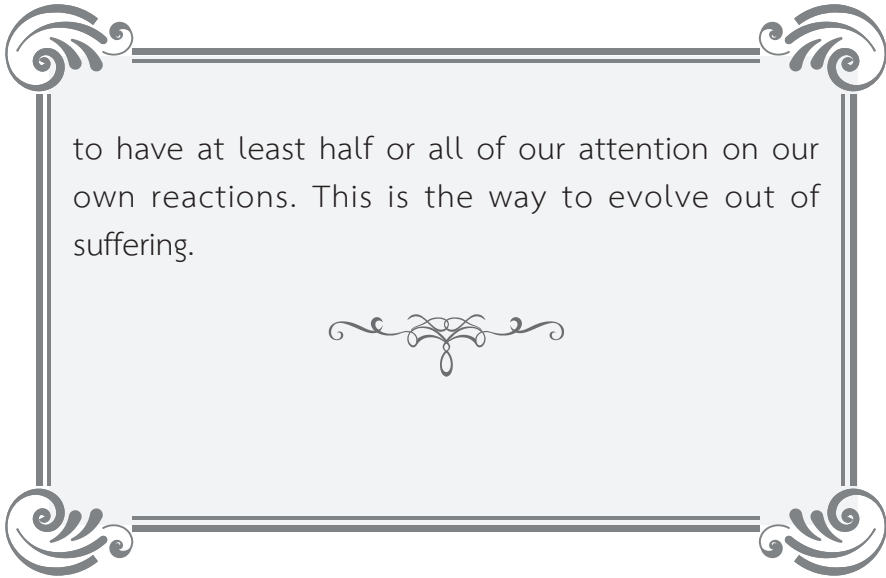


A negative emotion cannot arise in an enlightened being because an enlightened one has uprooted negativity. The only reason a negative emotion can come up in us is because our heart is not yet pure. That's why it can feel sad, angry or fearful. A higher being will not feel anything at all in the same situation where we'd feel like a victim. In fact, it is unlikely a higher being would get abused or mistreated, because an abuser wouldn't get the result they were looking for in a victim; he'd just get a smiling, blissful face looking back at him!

If we see what others are doing as an opportunity to notice our own reactions, it gives us an occasion to weed out our own impurities. If we never get to see our own pain inside, then we will certainly not gain wisdom regarding it. We will never consciously evolve.

Even if we are sympathizing, and feeling someone else's pain, it's really our pain. The Dalai Lama doesn't feel our pain; he feels compassion. It is compassion and wisdom, not pain and spite, that are the true mobilizers. It takes bravery and determination,





to have at least half or all of our attention on our own reactions. This is the way to evolve out of suffering.



*“ We run around aimlessly grasping at
this and that for happiness without ever
observing where happiness resides. ”*

Chapter 7

Levels of Happiness

What a joy to be able to teach this. I'm happy to be a teacher who is an expert on happiness! It is a nice subject to be able to share with everyone. Wouldn't it be great if happiness was a course that ran for a whole semester? I wish happiness wasn't merely taught to a select group of people, but taught across primary schools. We may have to start a university course and then the educational boards will slowly realize that it should be taught to all school children.

Happiness is perhaps the most important topic, yet most of the day we give our attention to far more superfluous matters. Let's learn about happiness now, not just as a bundle of thoughts and a state of mind, but let's allow the teachings to seep deeper into the heart. Let's smile, relax, be open and aware of our own body on and off while we learn.



Lower Forms of Happiness



There are so many aspects, nuances, and levels along the spectrum of happiness. They range from the lowest, most cruel levels, all the way to the most sublime states. The lowest levels of happiness are the levels where we have a lot of impurity or defilement in the mind. An example of the lowest level of happiness is when we get pleasure or satisfaction out of harming oneself or others. This leads to the least happiness in this life and future lives. Of course, physical harm is the worst of it. If we punch or hit someone, and enjoy or get satisfaction from it, we experience the lowest form of happiness. I'm not talking about martial arts or a strength competition, but rather getting into a fight and finding enjoyment when inflicting pain.

Another low level, very close to that is inflicting harm verbally, like getting a thrill from saying mean or nasty things. We should try to avoid these behaviours at all costs. Once we become aware we are doing such things we should try our very best to stop immediately. It is an extremely low current of energy that we are bringing into the world. Whenever we intentionally inflict harm onto others and feel happy doing so, whether in word or deed, what we are actually doing is emulating a demon. We are creating negative energy configurations

that want others to suffer. That's the definition of evil: satisfaction in inflicting pain. We don't have to think too hard to realize what our consciousness is practising to be in the next life if it continues along this path.

One step up on the levels of happiness, but still extremely low, is when we see others inflicting harm either physically or verbally and we enjoy it, find it humorous or seek it for happiness. This is like being one of the schoolyard bully's buddies. We aren't personally hurting or being mean to a child, yet we are finding enjoyment and entertainment from watching it. We may enjoy seeing others in pain, because we are in pain too. Misery loves company! I am sad to see a recent trend with comedies moving to harsher levels of ridicule. It is perpetuating the dangerous notions that it can be enjoyable to put people down, and that the meanest and most vulgar ways get the most attention. Some audiences find a sadistic comfort in these types of entertainment. When this becomes routine, they are unknowingly moving towards a future as part of a demon's retinue.

We should try as best as we can, to avoid any activity that includes personally inflicting harm or watching someone else inflicting harm on another. This is true even if the victim had done evils. Revenge is dangerous and destructive. If we think the person deserves the pain instead of a less violent punishment, we are mistaken. It is only

the worst within us that gets satisfaction out of inflicting or witnessing the pain of others. Unfortunately, this level of happiness is rampant and pervades mass media, the motion picture industry, the internet as well as most political situations.

We can experience temporary states of happiness from negative and destructive things because happiness in itself isn't a wholesome thing. It is a neutral thing. We can feel pleasure but happiness is no indication whatsoever that positive things are happening. Many negative things happen that we may derive happiness from if our state of being is functioning at a low level at that time. Many people achieve periods of happiness from negative actions.

I'm giving a warning against such types of happiness. In order to do negative things to gain feelings of happiness, we must have anger, pain and grudges in our heart. When we have such aversion in our heart, we are not feeling good; we are not feeling happy. The short stint of happiness we get when we harm others is an evil satisfaction. It will create negative habits, downward spirals and hinder the possibility of any higher levels of happiness.

This may not appear to be relevant to us. We may think we don't engage in any of this. We may, however, engage in it at a lesser degree, like with teasing. When we are teasing not from a place of love, but out of jealousy,

from a grudge, disliking or pain, the teasing is a form of bullying. It perpetuates bad habits. We are teaching our subconscious that we can actually feel good from harming. The subconscious will then seek to do it again. This is a dangerous habit to cultivate, and I want to warn everybody about the lower forms of happiness. We do these negative things out of habit because there is negativity in our heart already. The amount of happiness that comes up from these negative actions is very small and lasts a very short period compared to the amount of pain that will come to both the victim and the perpetrator. This is something we should be very careful of and try to notice in our lives. We do not want to perpetuate the habits of hell beings.



The Happiness of Obtaining



Moving up the ladder of happiness for human beings, we move to an obvious type of happiness. The happiness that arises when we get what we want. This includes having the opportunity to buy something we've wanted, receiving a gift we anticipated or having accomplished something we've set out to do. Unfortunately, this is the most prevalent type of happiness. I say unfortunately, because there are so many more powerful and beautiful levels, but we are far too immersed in this level in our societies to see them.

This type of happiness includes wanting to see a movie or a TV show. Once the show time finally arrives, we get happy when we turn on the TV and see that the show is about to begin. The happiness won't be sustained, however, and will come and go depending on what we think. If we've been looking forward to the show, we know that the happiness will arise when the show comes on. However, we spend a lot of time feeling less happy during the show. For example, we are in a state of wanting the protagonist to succeed and we want the lovers to be happy forever, and when that happens at the end, we are happy again. Then we are unhappy when the show is finished. This type of happiness cannot last.

We are always in a state of wanting whenever we are looking forward to the future. Whether it will be going to a fun movie, eating at the restaurant we love, meeting a favourite friend after work, going shopping or anticipating the upcoming holiday. We are usually excited about the future when we think of things that will happen soon. However, if we take a look at that moment of excitement, we are actually feeling anxious, less happy and hoping that a future moment will be even nicer. Most of the world is totally consumed by this type of happiness.

Even spiritual people who are working on themselves and meditating, still spend most of the day looking for the happiness we get from a feeling of peace, an experience we want, and becoming something greater than we are now. This is the level of happiness that advertising and the media has brainwashed us into believing is the one and only type of happiness - the happiness of obtaining.





Entertainment: Sustained Attention

There are a couple of aspects of happiness that I would like to bring to our attention. These are periods of happiness that we are not shown in advertisements or commercials. It is the type of happiness that comes up from keeping sustained attention. Although the promise is that we will be happy when we acquire something or do something we want, it's only a fleeting moment of happiness. We are usually happy when we get something at first, and then immediately following that exact moment, the feeling of happiness begins to slowly fizzle out. Happiness can be maintained for slightly longer periods when people have sustained attention. Uninterrupted attention on anything that we like or enjoy is generally happier than holding brief periods of attention. When we don't have sustained attention, our mind wavers from happiness to confusion, to frustration to unhappiness, from moment to moment. When we have sustained attention we have relief from all of that movement. We have relief from our wavering mind when we don't need to think about our problems for a little while. For example, when there's a TV show on that we really like, we can watch it for an hour, or power watch a whole series for several hours because we like it and our attention can stay with it. The same is true

with video games, a good novel, an intriguing conversation, and all forms of entertainment. We can forget about our own lives for a little while. If the content or quality doesn't meet our expectations, we start to get bored and don't want to continue. If we aren't able to keep sustained attention, we don't like it. It isn't making us happy.

What we don't realize is that what's actually making us happy is the sustained attention on it! It isn't the object of our attention but the actual attention itself that is making us most happy. In the example of a movie, it is the long, continuous attention on the show that we're gaining the happiness from. If it's a sporting event or a concert, we may think that these performances make us happy but it's really the uninterrupted attention on these events that is the primary aspect bringing in the happiness. The rest are just fleeting thrills and momentary satisfaction. Most TV shows and movies are so painful, harsh and violent, that the only happy part is if the good guys win. We suffer, twisting and turning our insides out for over an hour to just get a few minutes of satisfaction at the end.

Unfortunately, there are some of us who can sadistically sustain our attention with painful activities, but if they are too severe, the happiness from sustained attention won't be able to help. We may experience thrills, anxiousness and excitement, but it's not as happy

in the long run. Examples of this are violent movies or some concerts performed by hate-filled, deeply troubled musicians. Also, being involved in risky activities like gambling on the stock market makes us feel very anxious because things can go up and down. If we're being mindful of our emotions, there are short moments of excitement and many moments of unhappiness. The happiness that we're trying to gain from these activities is thrill or adrenaline. This isn't actually happiness. It is much coarser and there are many uncomfortable states of mind that ensue. They include adrenaline rushes and periods of excitement like we get from extreme sports or rollercoaster rides.

If we're mindful during these thrills, we will notice that there is a lot of squeezing going on in the energy field. These activities take us out of the normal drudgery of our lives. We're hoping we'll succeed in these thrills and like ourself better after. We're hoping we will make lots of money on the stock market or survive the bungee jump and take a picture of it to show others that we did it. It's a fleeting feeling of accomplishment but while we're actually doing these things, there's a lot of anxiousness, fear and yearning. It's nice to get a break and a relief from our regular lives but we're causing painful chemical reactions in our body. For example, when we're watching the stock market, a sporting event, or a show

we're really into and we're really hoping something happens, we're highly uncomfortable. The heart moves irregularly. It feels harsh and causes a lot of negative effects on the body, like squeezing and clenching, from the toes up to the teeth and forehead. Of course, when we're squeezing the whole body, we're squeezing the heart. This isn't happiness. For those who understand subtle energies, we are causing congestion in our chakras from these painful drug-like experiences and addictions.



Happiness needs to be studied before pursued. If you don't believe me, then just look at what we do to try to get it!

When we experience the happiness of sustained attention, we can see how we can shift some of the perspectives we have picked up from society. Normally, we sympathize with people who are writing exams because studying is demanding. We're taught not to like things like studying, or going to our office job, but if we are aware while we're doing them, we will notice that we are actually happy as long as we are present, and focused on whatever we're doing. If we're involved in a project at work and not thinking about other things, we are happy while being involved in the project. If we're not happy, it's because we're not involved in our work. It is quite simple. If we can remain focused on what we're doing without complaining, wishing we were doing something else or worrying about other people's opinions, happiness will show up.

Some of us may think that housework and cleaning are mundane and boring. Doing chores, like washing dishes and sweeping are things we generally consider unfavourable tasks. We would rather have other people do them for us. The time spent doing housework may actually be some of the most happy times in our day if we are present while we are engaged in

them. House chores are simple things that don't take much thought or effort. We can relax and stay focused on them. Of course, thoughts and stories will take us away, but if we keep returning our attention to the task at hand, it can be a very happy experience. We may even notice that's it's happier than a TV show with thrills, scares, sadness and ups and downs. It doesn't sound like housework will be happier or more fun. That's not what we were taught. Let's do the experiment. Let's stay present with our work and see for ourself if it's true.

There is happiness in getting what we want. Of course, it is a fleeting happiness, and then we need to get the next thing that we want. We may have an iPhone, and then we want the next iPhone and then the one after that. Then we have longer periods of happiness when we have sustained attention on something that isn't negative. There's more happiness from sustained attention on something that is either neutral like doing our chores, or something wholesome or beautiful like a Dhamma talk, a spiritual event or setting, or listening to music that comes from a higher place. The happiness is higher when it's sustained on these activities.



The Happiness of Relief



There are even more levels of happiness in regular life. Another higher-quality type of happiness is the happiness of relief. It is something that we seek, and rightly so. Relief is appreciated when there is tension in the body or tension in the mind, and then it is released. We seek relief in our daily life and there are some kinds of relief that we don't take into account. We get relief from not having to do things that we don't want to do. We have built up mental pain and anxiety, and then are relieved when it disappears. We also get relief from finally finishing something we didn't really want to do, finally saying something we needed to get off our chest, or parting ways with someone we didn't want to be with. We get the happiness of relief when we have completed something and we know there will be no more pressure for a while.

Happiness comes with relief as it feels like a burden has been lifted. When we're exercising with the misplaced attitude of getting things over with, and we finally complete it, we are happy from the relief of its end. We could have had happiness through sustained attention on the exercise instead, but having missed that opportunity, we still get a few moments of relief when it is over. The end of our workout brings happiness, but only

if we don't think about having to do it all over again tomorrow!

The happiness of relief comes when the work day is complete too. When we don't have sustained attention on our work, we are generally unhappy, restless, looking at the clock and complaining about the job, the workload, the boss or anything our mind can grab onto other than the job at hand! We could have been happy all day if we had sustained attention, but at least we get the happiness of relief when it is over for the day. If we pay attention to this relief, we will see that it's a higher class of happiness than the happiness that comes from acquiring things. It's lighter and more comfortable, easily attainable, more dependable, and can go very deep as I'll explain later.

Happiness arises after pain goes away and the relief is felt. We want it gone, and then it goes. For example, we're lying down and feeling stiffness in our body. We don't want to feel stiff; it's uncomfortable. We stand and stretch and get some relief. We feel a little happiness after the stretch, and we feel looser. Then we're standing too long and start to feel achy from standing, so we sit. We feel a little happiness from the relief of sitting, from "taking a load off." Then we are very thirsty. Doesn't it feel wonderful when we finally get the water we need? AAhhhhh.....

This is a typical routine for just about everyone, all day long. This is the kind of happiness that comes up so often during the day but we rarely notice it as our attention is on lesser joys; on what we can get next.

What ends up happening after relief occurs, is the mind wavers again. It jumps from the higher quality happiness of relief, to a lower kind of happiness, like excitement about what to eat now. Our source of happiness drops from the higher form, to a lower form. We're not trained to recognize and enjoy the higher state of happiness of relief as much. When we sink down in this way, we are creating bad habits. If we pay attention we'll notice the moments of relief more and more. We can build the habit of recognizing the relief as being more enjoyable and more sustainable than whatever the mind jumps to after the relief. We can see it is a higher form of happiness because it is more calm and comfortable, and it doesn't involve material things. Let's investigate and sense the qualities of happiness for ourselves.

Happiness from getting stuff is far more fleeting and superficial. We are all well acquainted with this lower form of happiness. We know at some level that there is no end to trying to get what we want. We know that worldly goods are not going to create lasting happiness. This is why if we're mindful in our daily life, we may notice the more subtle things, like the happiness of relief.

This may sound funny but we may notice that some of the happiest moments of the entire day are when we go to the washroom! When we go the washroom and relieve ourself, it is a very happy moment. In fact in the Thai language, the formal word for the washroom translates in English to “happiness room”. *Sukha* is a Thai word for both washroom and happiness.

Of course, there is also relief from pain. If we’re sick or have a headache and it goes away, we feel the relief of not having that pain. It feels great to be relieved from it. If we don’t have a headache for years or months, we don’t get any happiness at all from not being sick. In contrast, if we are sick and then get well, there is tremendous happiness from being relieved from it. We can see that there’s more happiness that follows the suffering than from not suffering at all.

Without suffering, we would have a difficult time enjoying things. If we don’t feel hunger, we don’t experience the happiness of satiating the hunger. If we don’t have pain, then we don’t get to feel the happiness of relief from pain. We get almost no happiness from good health if we don’t ever have ill health. Let’s not make an enemy of the suffering periods of our life because there can be a tremendous relief that follows. We also come to appreciate things that we formerly took for granted, like good health.

“We shouldn’t fear suffering. We wouldn’t know what pleasure is without it.”

Relief is one of the reasons we love our addictions. There’s the pain of needing them, and then the happiness or relief of getting to take them. That is why, for some people, their morning coffee is the happiest moment of the day. There are other reasons, like having that time alone, peacefully enjoying a cup of coffee, feeling groggy before having the coffee and feeling awake after. There is a strong dose of happiness from the satiation of the addiction. There is the pain of addiction, the physical symptoms, and the subsequent relief. Let’s pay attention to this because if we quickly jump to the next thing, like grabbing the news paper or chatting on our phones, we don’t get to appreciate the happiness of relief.

Those who practice yoga may recognize that a lot of the happiness during yoga comes from the various moments of relief; whether it is the relief from the discomfort eased by stretching or the relief of finally ending a pose. The body and mind experience relief in yoga over and over again. With sustained attention and tons of relief, no wonder yoga is so popular!

When we are doing something we like, such as reading a real pager-turner, having fun with friends or playing a game, we can notice that the happiness relies

on being engaged in the activity. When that activity ends, we lose the happiness we got from it. There may be a few moments of satisfaction afterward, reflecting on the fun time, or perhaps relief if the game was strenuous, but essentially, the happiness is over for now. Even if we are just relaxing contently and then we have to go do something, we lose the happiness we enjoyed from that relaxation. The reason our happiness dissolves is because we were attached to the activity that was making us happy. There can be happiness for short periods when we do what we enjoy in our free time, but there's never fulfillment. There's never an extended happiness when we rely on something to be or remain a particular way. There's an element of attachment that seeps in; the situation has to stay the particular way we want it for our happiness to continue. Of course, this is impossible. Everything changes; nothing persists. Happiness rooted in attachment is ultimately unfulfilling.

Here we move into some of the more subtle and beautiful levels of happiness. Some of us have experienced these and others of us have not. There is certainly a happiness that arises when we have accomplished something and feel good about ourself. Achieving something by way of causing harm, however, will not cause any reliable happiness. There will always be a feeling of anxiety associated with it. We can feel good about ourself when

we have made genuine accomplishments, with a wholesome mind, causing no pain or harm and having only good intentions. A good example is volunteer work, or being appreciated or recognized for doing worthy things. That's a happiness that keeps on giving. Any time we remember a virtuous or charitable effort, we gain happiness from merely reflecting on it. We appreciate ourself. It is really important to reflect on positive accomplishments and goodness often.

For mothers and fathers, remembering some of the good parenting that we did can be rewarding. Especially for mothers, there is a lot of sacrifice and wholesomeness in doing our very best carrying a child for nine months and delivering it. When looking back on these times, we can feel good about ourself and feel happy.



The Overlooked Happiness of Morality



The aspect of happiness I want to emphasize here is morality. Something we normally don't get taught in our modern world is that there is much happiness that comes from morality. If we see a wallet on the ground, there could be some thrill or excitement about keeping the money if nobody sees us take it. However, along with the excitement, will be the fear and the knowledge that we did something wrong. There will be trails of unhappiness associated with this whenever we think of it. Taking something that is not ours is immoral and causes the opposite of happiness, even if we were able to achieve a lot of money from doing it. If, on the other hand, we decide to leave the wallet for the owner to find or we try to contact the owner to return it, we are doing a very moral thing. This creates a substantial amount of happiness. We will reflect on this and feel good about what we did. Morality is an extremely underrated type of happiness and it is also a gift that keeps on giving. We are usually taught by higher quality families and religions to be moral because it is right and responsible, but the lesson on how morality brings about happiness is often skipped or unknown to them.

Helping people is another step up in happiness, but just even in the simplicity of being a moral person, we'll find much happiness. Let's not harm others in word or deed, steal, cheat or lie. If we are good, we feel happy about who we are, and are happy in our own skin. This is priceless. We are more in line with our highest version of ourselves. Being a person with a pure and moral heart will bring even more happiness in this life and in future lives. There is a more reliable happiness in morality than in seeking what we want and getting it through acquisition, thrills or from satiating addictions.

Indeed, a very important type of happiness is available through morality. There is a comfort in being oneself. If we cheat, steal or harm others we will have a harder time relaxing or sleeping at night. We will have to cover up our misdeeds and find ways to distract ourselves from ourselves because ultimately there's something in us that we find unbearable. On the other hand, if we establish ourselves in morality, we will become far more comfortable with ourselves, and this will enable us to concentrate and meditate, rather than having to stay busy and distracted.

Once we have that essential step of morality in place we can experience higher levels of happiness from states of meditation.



Happiness in Meditation



Once we have the essential step of morality in place, we can experience higher levels of happiness from states of meditation. When we meditate we have sustained attention. The wonderful thing is that the sustained attention is on a wholesome or neutral object, like a mantra, the breath, or a body scan. This object doesn't cause us or anyone any harm or pain. The object is a comforting one, and there's happiness from our attention remaining with something soothing and wholesome. Moreover, as meditation directs the attention away from our thoughts, there is a feeling of relief from being away from our internal worries and struggles.

Then there's yet another level of happiness that occurs in meditation. When the mind picks up the object and stays with it on its own, without any trying, holding or forcing at all, this is where meditation truly begins. This is called samatha. If the mind is happy with the object and decides to stay with it on its own, there isn't any impurity left in our heart or consciousness. There is a tremendous amount of happiness that arises when thought and impurities reduce in our heart. All of these impurities are subdued. For example, when we have our attention on the breath, and the mind automatically stays with the breath, there is no painful holding or

forcing or trying to be with the object. There isn't any painful hoping or wanting. All of these coarser mental states drop off when the mind achieves proper samatha. When the mind stays with the object effortlessly, there is a tremendous amount of happiness in the absence of pain and discomfort. A great relief comes from not having to be with the wavering mind or negative emotions. This is a very beautiful and serene state.

Samatha meditation will go even deeper than that. In higher levels of meditation, the happiness becomes stronger and stronger. At the highest levels, even happiness eventually becomes seen as something a bit unsettling. It has too much energy to it. The happiness is seen as something that has an element of anxiety in it and hinders the calm. At very subtle levels of meditation, the happiness is then dropped in favour of equanimity, which is more like peace. The mind can then rest in a state of pure peace and awareness. This is a very sublime happiness. This is a mind in the state of jhana.

When the mind comes out of this state, it is usually unhappy about it. It sees the worldly kinds of happiness as coarse, frivolous and futile. The mind will want to be in the sublime states again. We can see that even the most subtle, beautiful meditation or samatha practice has an element of attachment in it. It isn't even the purest happiness. There is an even higher level of happiness; this is

where mindfulness comes in.



Lasting Happiness



We can reach even higher states of happiness than states of meditation when we have this all important aspect of mindfulness. It is so vital because it can lead to wisdom that brings lasting, reliable happiness.

When we are attached to something that brings us joy, we rely on it and need it to be a certain way. Even if there's something negative that goes away and we get relief, there's still an attachment to the relief. There's even a subtle attachment to that state. Once we have mindfulness, where we're able to see what's in our heart and what we're actually attached to, then the mind can be free of attachment.

We believe that we're attached to the outside world and the things in our lives. At a subtler level what we're attached to is the reactions, emotions and feelings that arise within us. Our hearts and minds cling to our moods like a leech to our skin. When true mindfulness sees the feeling, the mind releases from the feeling.

We won't see this unless we practise mindfulness for a few months. We will have an experience and an understanding of what I'm teaching. Basically, our sub-conscious is gripping and locking into feelings all of the time. However, we don't see that we're attached, holding and gripping. When mindfulness sees the feeling, the grip releases and we experience something even more powerful, which is release. We release the grip that we have on the emotion. We drop anger, irritation, frustration, fear, sadness and greed right in their tracks. Then there's a very profound momentary happiness, where consciousness has let go of what it was really attached to: our own feelings.

Of course there's a wonderful happiness when we release from a negative emotion. There is also happiness from releasing a positive emotion. Even when we're gripping happiness and wanting to keep it there, not wanting it to slide away, that gripping is painful and is lurking in the background. When we see the happiness and we release from it, there's a more sublime happiness from the release. This goes deeper and deeper as we become more mindful and experience these states more often. As we practise more, we may get to experience the release again and again, many times in a single minute. There is a release, and then attachment again, and then another release. As we experience the release over and

over with great frequency, it appears to be a sustained release as the separate observer. We are free of the burden of clinging for a while.

There's an even happier state possible after this. If we can sustain this separate observer, we start to see the truth of the body and mind. The mind releases its hold on the body from time to time and the body will appear as not who we are.

We may not realize this but our consciousness is attached and holding to the body at all times, believing that the body is a "me". When this sustained separate observer is there, it occasionally has flashes of wisdom and sees that the body is not us. A powerful release happens when it sees the body is not us. Tremendous relief and a more powerful happiness comes when consciousness sees that the feelings, emotions and thoughts are not us. Sometimes these are short flashes and other times they are sustained for short periods.



Ultimate Happiness



The highest happiness is the happiness of wisdom. When wisdom comes in, it shows us in our experience - not in words but in our direct experience - that the body and mind can be released. The mind and body can be seen as not who we are. Then the whole burden of trying to make this body and mind happy doesn't have to be succumbed to anymore. We see the body and the mind doing whatever it is that they do, seeking their pleasures and happiness and seeking relief. Yet, we are not involved in it. We have true equanimity. This is a far more powerful equanimity than what is found in deep meditation. Out of wisdom, we're no longer interfering with the body and mind. We have the wisdom that we are not this body and mind. Any state of body and mind can bring at most, a temporary form of happiness. No physical or mental state of this body and mind can persist. This type of equanimity from wisdom is the highest happiness available for us. It's the most powerful and most blissful state possible for a regular, non-enlightened human being and it's the gateway to enlightenment. Of course at enlightenment the wisdom is permanent. Therein lies the ultimate in lasting happiness.



Talk is Cheap



Talking about this lasting happiness is just talking about it. It is impossible to experience it now. For all of us there's an attachment. We believe that we are this body and this mind and we stick to them like glue. The happiness of mindfulness is required so that the happiness of the separate observer can be achieved. As the separate observer, wisdom comes in, and the happiness becomes more and more sublime, especially as the mind approaches equanimity.

Discussing these things as regular people is like talking about a planet we've never been to, or describing a colour that we've never seen. We have to walk the path ourselves. We can imagine holding something very heavy for a very long time, gripping and squeezing it. This is what we've been doing all our lives. We're gripping and squeezing this body and mind. Then with wisdom, we just let them go. The ultimate in relief!



This was an exploration of the types of happiness available for all of us. This lesson can be useful for us if we start to see the kinds of happiness that we've neglected. We may also become interested in studying our own happiness and seeing how it grows as we develop into better quality and more mindful people. With the relentless pursuit of happiness going on in the world

outside, through unwholesome and sometimes the strangest of means, the potential for the greatest happiness has always been from turning our attention around and looking within.




You've mentioned that people can be happy from unwholesome actions. Can you comment more on how happiness and wholesomeness are distinct?

If we are taking everyone's money at a card game, and want their houses and cars too, we can be happy with our winning streak, and all the while our mind is unclean, stained with greed and craving. I'm talking about happiness that is just a temporary feeling. This feeling cares neither about the world nor about what's right or wrong. It can and often does accompany greedy mental states. This greed will lead to bad karma, creating future circumstances less conducive to happy states. Instant gratification



doesn't usually work for us in the long run as we all know from experiences with fast food and impulse buys! Happiness accompanies doing good and wholesome deeds often. In fact, it is impossible to feel unhappy in a wholesome state of mind. All wholesome states, such as mindfulness, compassion and patience will arise with either happiness or equanimity. Anger, sadness, greed and the like cannot be present while the mind is pure. This information is available (though very complex!) in the Abhidhamma texts of the Buddhist scriptures regarding moment to moment mind states. It isn't terribly helpful to read though. We must observe it ourself. It is very interesting to observe the mind and see how it works. It all can be verified in our own experience.



“

*The brain is not the miracle of life.
It actually causes major limitations.*

”

Chapter 8



Mind and Brain: What Religion and Science Have Overlooked

I would like us to all to pause for a moment, and take a breath. Let's not hurry along to the next thing I may explain. Breathe comfortably. Now, I'd like us to mentally repeat the following question, and see what ideas or images arise: What is my mind? Let's close our eyes, say the question and wait calmly to see our ideas and associations.

The traditional, present day understanding is that the mind is something that is in the brain. This is what people generally believe to be true. It is the usual understanding, but it is simply not true. It never was true. Hopefully, I can help us to achieve some profound experiences where we sense the truth that the mind is not something that is located inside the head.

The main misunderstanding here, and where logic fails us, is we believe the mind is something that is observable through the five physical senses. It so happens that all five senses are available above the neck. Four of the five make up the face. The eyes, ears, nose, and the tongue are confined to the head, and the sense of touch covers the whole body, which of course includes

the head. The foot can't see or hear, only the head at the top area of the body can. We identify so strongly with ourselves as we relate to the world through our senses that, of course, we perceive this head to be the primary focus of what we are and where our mind resides.

From the start, then, we begin our search for the mind from the wrong place. We do this because of a funny truth: the eyes are in the front of the head. That is why we adhere with all our might to the silly thought that "I have to see it to believe it." We believe we have to see something with our own eyes, which happens to be near the top of the head and from where we think our world begins. It is where we navigate the world from, and where we falsely assume that our mind is located. Surprise, surprise! When we hear scientific data about how every message must make its way through the brain with electrical impulses, and how it affects us when areas of the brain don't function, we proceed to accept that our assumption was correct.



Who am I?



As a demonstration, let's ask ourselves now, "Who am I?" Let's look around our surroundings. Let's repeat our name out loud for ourselves to hear. We may sense that there is an association with that name and these surroundings. There will be an emotional charge behind that name. If there is no emotional charge for some of us, then we either aren't being truthful with ourselves or we've subdued the mind, lulled it into an unnatural meditative (or vegetative!) state.

For most of us, there will be an emotional charge when we say our name. There will be memories and an energy behind that name for us; an identity. This identity is constructed primarily through our memories. Our memories are essentially constructed from what we have experienced through our eyes and ears: what we have seen and what we have heard.

We accumulate images, whether accurate or not, of what we have seen and heard of our life experiences. Each image contains an emotional charge. For example: This we liked. This we detested. That brought heartbreak. This caused chaos. That was joyous.

We also take in data through our eyes and ears about other people. We create ideas from what they have and how they present themselves, and the ways in

which they may be better or worse than us. Then, we solidify an image of who we are by comparing ourselves to others. We also see what's out there in the world and make an identity out of what we hope and aspire for. This identity that we create is based in memory and the emotional charges that these memories hold. We reinforce it regularly. If we pay attention as we ride through a very affluent neighborhood, for example, we will see how we create a self out of our memories and comparisons. In spiritual circles we often catch ourselves creating an identity by comparing our attainments to our peers', and feeling miles down from the heights of our teachers.

The fabrication of our identity in the world begins at the senses. To see how this works, let's imagine the last beach we were on. A picture will come up for us. The picture or video that plays in this memory is seen from this perspective simply because the eyes are in the front of the head.

Classical science, unfortunately, trusts the eyes and the other sense organs as providing a true account of our environment. This is faulty from the beginning, as we know the eyes only pick up a particular range of vibrations and interpret them. The eyes are interpreters of some waves and vibrations; hardly a beacon of truth.

Then as science developed quantum mechanics, we learned that we can't entirely trust the eyes. We discovered that on a tiny, minute level - the quantum level - that things behave differently than what we had previously believed. Things behave in ways that are unpredictable, not intuitive or based on our senses. New science became aware that what we see isn't what it truly looks like out there. When we break everything down to its smallest elements, the building blocks of the universe do not follow our logic at all!

We've used these new understandings in many ways. How have we used them? One way is in the field of philosophy. We've used them to pontificate and wonder about what the mind might actually look like, or what the truth of existence is on other planets. We've use them to conjure up very cool and interesting ideas to think about, like the notion of multiple universes and instantaneous transmission of information. In other ways, these new understandings help create interesting and smart technologies. By using the intellect to think of possibilities and improving technology, modern science has brought us smarter phones, but not a smarter population. This is very unfortunate, but science is limited in what it can do for us on a deeper level. It is limited by the way we are forced to navigate the world: within this body and its five senses.

True Knowledge Requires Mindfulness and Concentration



This is our regular, everyday life: seeing, hearing, tasting, forming images and opinions, feeling good or feeling bad. It is extremely superficial. The mind, in contrast, is something that is capable of so much more than that. It has so much more potential. I'd like to discuss what the mind really is and what it's actually doing, beyond what science can understand. The only way this can be understood is by a high degree of mindfulness and a high degree of concentration. Sadly, these are two things that are unavailable through science and religious faith, because both are working at the levels of concept, belief and the senses. Neither science nor our faith can teach us how to be correctly mindful and correctly concentrated.

If we're not correctly mindful or concentrated, there is no opportunity to see what the mind is, where the mind is, what the mind does and to experience its potential. These are all unavailable through science and religion because they are based in thought and belief. Some religions are nicely based in practice, but all they can create for us are more positive feelings of comfort, community, faith and purpose. Some have lower levels of concentration through prayer, it is true. But certainly

nothing that can show us the nature of the mind.

Even across Buddhism, which at its essence is a religion that encourages the practice of growing in mindfulness and concentration, it's extremely hard to find even one or two souls that are successful in achieving correct mindfulness and concentration. A lot of the teachings have been diluted and distorted. I've been extremely fortunate in seeking, finding and developing under some wonderful masters who have helped to show me the practice of correct mindfulness and concentration. They have helped me develop these so I can experience the true nature of the mind and now share this knowledge with everyone.



Organic Mush



Now, thinking that the mind is synonymous with the brain is something that is regarded as natural in the West but is actually laughed at by those with direct knowledge and experience to the contrary. The mind has nothing to do with the brain. If we can clearly sense what the brain is, we will see that it is just organic, slimy mush. *Brain* is a word that is used to describe a physical phenomenon that is located in the physical head of a human or animal. It is bloody and squishy. There are electrical impulses, but it is still mush. It's meat. Can we all see this?

When we use the word *brain*, we like to incorporate it with *mind*. We see the brain as where thought happens, where memory is kept, and where most of the things we take to be ourselves are stored. When we say our "brain", we have an identification with a "me" being in the brain. This occurs because the eyes are in front of the head and are so close in proximity to the brain. It's as if we are seeing directly from the brain.

As explained earlier, a large part of our identity is constructed from what we experience through our eyes and sense organs located in the head. We rely on the eyes so much to maneuver through our physical world, to make sure that we walk around without

bumping into things or falling. With our identity up in the head, the act of walking, which of course we do with the legs, has become mostly a head-first experience. Our attention isn't on the legs moving. We don't identify much with them. The legs are basically seen as having the function of moving the head from here to there, so the eyes and the head can benefit from sensing different locations.

The mind is not in the head. We may say that science can show that there is an area of the brain that holds memories. Some may say that when information is taken in, electrical impulses fire. Others may say that science can show various areas of the brain are responsible for different functions, because of nerve activity in these areas and the failure of abilities when these areas are impaired. Because we can see movement and electrical impulses in the brain for every function that we perform, science therefore concludes that the brain is responsible for operating them all. This reasoning is a bit of a jump.

I'm going to paint a very, very different picture. What I'll say first is that the brain is not where everything resides. It is merely a physical manifestation. That is why we can always go back to the brain and see that something happened there. We require the brain for physical movement and activity. We require messa-

ges to pass through the brain, but the brain itself isn't the one issuing the message of the intent to do any of these things. From a scientific point of view, the brain appears to be a command center, but it is the exact opposite of a command center. It is more of a slave. This mushy, slimy electric receiver and sender is involved in everything we do. It's like a router. Because we can see the electrical impulses, we are convinced that thought is something that happens in the brain. This is not true. Thought doesn't happen in the brain. Life isn't happening in the brain. It is organ meat, just like an eyeball, the stomach or the lungs, but similarly performs important physical functions.

The truth of this is evident in our experience once we have correct mindfulness. When mindfulness comes up quickly, at a high frequency, we start to see where the thought impulses come from. We see that they are not coming from the brain. They are coming from another area of our aura.



The Center of the Chest



Let's bring attention now, very gently, to the area of the body just below the heart in the center of the chest, closer to the diaphragm. Now, let's take a moment to think of something that makes us very happy. It could be the birth of a child, or an amazing opportunity or experience we have had in our life. When we think of this wonderful experience, we will notice an expansion or a happiness that happens in this area. This area actually gets lighter. This isn't easy to sense at first.

Now, let's think of something sad or bad that happened to us in our life. Let's stay with this thought for a moment. We may notice that this area in the center of the chest, near the diaphragm, actually gets tighter and we have discomfort when we think of something negative.

This is not where the mind is, but it is the area where all mental formations arise. They don't even arise from inside the physical body, but from this energetic space. Everything that our mind creates emerges extremely quickly out of this area. When our mindfulness is very powerful, we are able to notice thoughts coming up and moving rapidly. We are also able to notice the emotions and mental states arising quickly. Sometimes the mindfulness is so strong, that the thoughts

disappear as fast as they come up. What begins to happen is we start to notice that all of these formations, not just the emotions, but even the thoughts, are all coming out of this area at the center of the chest. They each come and go so quickly. It's like an old style film projector moving swiftly from one frame to the next.

When the speed of our mindfulness is just slightly slower, where the thoughts can get interpreted into words, we can see that the words are coming out of the center of the chest. They are not coming out of the brain. Amazingly, what happens is that the impulses, and even the words, begin at the center of the chest, and make their way up to the head, like waves of information. When we are busy in thought, they actually move up to a cloudy area in front of the eyes. Thai Buddhists call this moha or delusion. It is known as the hazy state of being lost in the blur of our preoccupations and day-dreams.

To review, these impulses, some of which are thoughts, come out of the center of the chest, and they make their way into a cloud in front of the eyes. When they get to that point, we are in our own inner dialogue, talking to ourselves, immersed in our thoughts and stories. This is called delusion. This is where we are living virtually all of the time if we haven't yet become avid mindfulness practitioners.

We may be able to notice what is going on in our mind right now. As we are reading or hearing this, we as human beings are having our own internal conversation. We're saying we like this or we don't like that, or this is interesting, or we don't believe that. We can sense that not only is there a conversation going on within ourself but we are reading or listening to this as well. When we notice this happening, it arises in front of the eyes and in the chest, but certainly not in the brain. As this takes place, there are corresponding electrical movements and physical manifestations going on in the brain, but no true mental phenomena. The brain has the task of sending the messages around, which among other things, keeps us alive and functioning.

When a medical scholar sees an association between the lack of electrical impulses or activity in a certain area of a patient's brain and the lack of memory, the conclusion derived is that the memory exists in that part of the brain. This isn't true. What is true, is that the brain sends the messages. The messages can't be sent if that area isn't firing. The memory still completely and utterly exists, but can't manifest. In fact, our memory is more vast than we can imagine. Unfortunately, we're only involved in the memory that comes from thought in this lifetime. Memory is not always thought. In actuality, all of our data, from this life and others, is still all available in our memory.

The brain isn't where the memory is. Memories don't exist in the physical world! The brain is just a physical organ acting as a messenger receiving signals from a non-physical phenomenon. Then, when a researcher sees that memory loss coincides with decaying areas of the brain, he makes false assumptions. The memory isn't stored there. It is certainly true, however, that on the physical level when a brain isn't functioning as it should, we won't be able to think or speak properly.

On the other hand, a person that has developed in mindfulness and understanding to the point where she has let go of the falsehood that she is this physical body, isn't internally affected by malfunctions of the brain. Such a person may not be able to express herself if the brain won't send messages to the mouth and throat. She may even forget her own name. The thoughts may even be incapable of using the language that has been learned in this lifetime. However, her brain isn't necessary for all the memories. An enlightened being with Alzheimer's for example, may not appear to be in good shape, but she is in wonderful shape internally! She is in bliss and is in full wisdom. Although her brain can no longer send messages and she may appear vegetative and clueless, the mind is in good form, even if it is unable to express as much.

As long as we are totally identified with thought, which is basically 100% of humans in this world minus a few handfuls of people, the experience of Alzheimer's or dementia will completely affect us. This is because we are totally identified with thought and haven't found where the mind is. The mind is still mistaken to be the brain. For us, the brain failing means our mental faculties fail. It may not be until the next life that our faculties return.

Thought comes up as an impulse. Then we talk to ourselves. For example, if I decide I am going to the store to get some milk, this will come up as an impulse in the center of the chest. In a split second, we already know and understand that thought. Then, even after we already fully know and understand it, we tell ourself in words, "I am going to the store to get some milk." We then believe that the words we just said to ourself, spoken internally or out loud, were the thought. We believe that this is what we understood and this is the reason why we are going to the store. The genuine truth in this example is that we understood the thought before we said it to ourself. We then proceeded to tell ourself, like a commentator. The commentating isn't actually the thought. The commentating is just unnecessary noise, the result of hundreds of thousands of years of human conditioning and survival. Every mental

formation, including every thought, every emotion, every mood, every worry that we have ever had, all happened in a split second as a tiny impulse from the energetic region of the diaphragm.

Our experience of thought and what we believe is true, is the chatter that appears around the head. When we review the process, we see that: thought starts as an impulse in the chest, which contains all the information within it. We already understand it and then we commentate. Of course, we need thought to navigate our world but we don't actually require the commentary. We don't need it, but there's nothing we can do to stop it. It is automatic. The interesting thing is, we can understand absolutely everything that goes on in our life without having to talk to ourselves about it. In fact, we can understand the world much better, be less fooled by it, have powerful focus and solve problems more easily without our constant inner deliberation.

Now, I'd like us all, with our eyes open, to make a fist. Once we've made a fist, then let's open the fist and relax the hand. Let's do this a few more times. Make a fist, open the fist; make a fist, open the fist. Ok. Now let's close our eyes and repeat this action a few times.

Not only do we know that we're still doing this once we've closed our eyes, but there's also a mental image of our hand in our psyche. In a sense, we know

what the hand looks like as we do this. It is very subtle, but we are able to notice an image of the hand moving, in addition to knowing that the hand is moving in our direct, physical experience of it.

Now, let's close our eyes and put a little smile on our face.

We may notice that with this little smile, we had an image of what the smile looks like, or of what our own face looks like while smiling. Our memory is so intricate that it creates a picture of the face smiling or the hand moving, with wonderful detail and it impresses that image right over top of that physical area. We believe that when we make a little smile, we know exactly what that looks like. We can sense that there's a face there, and that it's smiling and what it looks and feels like. This is the work of memory.

Let's bring our attention to our big toe and whatever it's touching. If it is not touching anything then let's press it against the floor. When we do this, there is a split second of complete attention on that area. What happens is the remainder of the body ceases to exist for that moment. The reason why the rest of the body ceases to exist is because when we have complete concentration, just for that moment, the memory is not working. It occurs in a flash and will be too quick to notice when mindfulness is not powerful.

But what we can recognize is that something physical took place and then a memory kicked in with an image of what the physical experience looked like. In slow motion, we would see the physical contact happen with no knowledge of our body, and in the next moment, poof! Memory comes back. When it does, it recreates our image of our body and superimposes this image of the body over top of what we actually feel. We can't feel our whole body. We just feel little bits of pressure and contact here and there. The memory and images fill in the details. This isn't easy to see at first, but after some practise, we will see that we have been spending our entire lives in mental images.

Now, at this moment, we can notice if we are sitting in a chair, that there is physical contact going on with the body. What happens is our memory fills in the gaps and makes a picture of us sitting on the chair. As a result, memory is compensating for the gaps in our understanding and having us pretend to know what we are and what we look like.



We Are Not Physical



The bones, the flesh, the brain - the entire human body is comprised of a range of vibrations that are perceived by our senses to be physical. This is just one part of the aura. Any of us who have studied Reiki or other healing arts have been taught about the field of energy that surrounds the body. Some of us have had experiences feeling energy coming through the body. We may sense that the physicality of the body can dissipate somewhat. There will still be plenty of memory offsetting our understanding here because our mindfulness is not strong enough yet to see the whole truth of the body. However, if there is even one moment of concentration solely on the energy, we will notice that just for that moment, the body ceases to exist. The reason it ceases to exist, is because the body is part of the delusion. It never really did exist as such. It's part of the memory coming up and reconstructing an image. It's faking an image. If we're able to notice the energetic essence of the body as some healers do, it is surely a pleasant experience and can point us closer to the truth. Although, the body may be perceived as light energy, we shouldn't assume it is what we are.

I mentioned that all formations are coming out from the center of the chest. This includes memory. What's

actually happening here, out of this tiny area, flashing at an incredible number of moments per second, is our entire world including our physical body is being formed. In every flash, in every millisecond, memory is being reproduced again and again. Thoughts, impulses, desires and worries - all the things that we are lost in - are all incredibly fast impulses that appear in the energetic region of the diaphragm. They are creating our entire experience. Buddhism refers to these as mental moments or *cetasika* in the Pali language. Our entire experience including every thought, every worry, every happiness, every memory, and every experience of this physical body sitting here and breathing, is all being projected out of this area. This area is the slide by slide projector and our human experience, our life itself, is the screen.

If we pay attention to this area, just below the center of the chest around the diaphragm, and if we don't hold our attention too intensely here, we can notice that this is where we sense our emotions most acutely. This is our emotional center. To sense this from time to time is the beginning of mindfulness. What happens next is we begin to see that our entire life, and all that influences our experiences is streaming from there.

Once everything has escaped from this area, without being seen by mindfulness, it is projected to create this delusion of a human being sitting and breathing.

We can sense we are doing this right now. Ultimately, if we are sensing a person sitting here breathing, we are lost in the delusion. From the delusion, what do we do? We appeal to science, religion and the words of others to try to understand things. Can we see that our attempt at understanding is coming far too late for any true comprehension? Without mindfulness, we begin our studies when we are already swimming in the delusion. No wonder we start off with so many false assumptions regarding ourself and our mind. Mindfulness helps us to get rid of these assumptions and start from the beginning of creation.



Where is the Mind?



Let me deepen our understanding further by getting rid of a conclusion we may have drawn from this discussion. The question, “Where is the mind?” may appear to have an answer now. We may think that the mind is an energetic space in the lower center of the chest near the diaphragm. That’s not actually true either. What is true is this energetic area is where the mental formations are coming from. That doesn’t mean the mind is situated there and is shooting these things out. The question, “Where is the mind?” can only be answered by saying that the mind is wherever a mental phenomenon is observed. The mind isn’t something solid. It isn’t even mentally solid. It is not an entity that exists in the world, per se. The mind is something that arises and then disappears with every phenomenon. The mind is not something that holds still indefinitely while the rest of our experience emanates from it.

There is a separate mind, or a separate moment of consciousness, that coexists with each mental phenomenon. This is how we are able to know what it is that we’re thinking, seeing, hearing, or feeling, emotionally or physically. The mind is that bare awareness of all objects of consciousness. It is the way by which there is a knowledge of phenomena. That is what we call the mind.

It is important to understand that there is a new mind in every moment. This new mind comes up with whatever mental phenomenon is present in the moment. Then the mind drops off and so does the mental phenomenon. Following this, there is a very, tiny sliver of a space before another mind comes up, containing all the memory and all the information that the previous mind had. It arises along with the new mental phenomenon that has come up, in a series of causes and effects.

Much of this is very difficult to understand intellectually, but I hope that this teaching is working its way in deeper and generating the motivation to experience these truths first hand. We may eventually arrive at a place where we can see all the things that are happening in our lives, all the thoughts, all the feelings and even what we considered our mind to be, as simply projections on a screen. We may see that the projector is firing these images quickly, or that our life is being streamed moment to moment. We may start to see all of our pain, suffering, difficulties, all of the happy and unhappy feelings, successes and failures, all of our circling around in our similar thoughts and patterns, as merely a stream of formations. We may also see that these formations, what we previously thought to be our self and our life, contain far more negatives than positives. If we see truthfully, this is what we will see. There may be hope that it's going to

get better, but that hoping doesn't go away.

All the pain, the struggle and the movement of this pain is actually projected onto this screen and is not the way things really are. Once we've practised mindfulness consistently within the delusion, separated out from the delusion, and have seen the movement of mental phenomena at a tremendous speed, we rise above the delusion of human existence.

Let me break this down further. Let's close our eyes and sense the body breathing just briefly. Then let's mentally glance down at that area in the center of the chest, which will always have some sort of a feeling or a mood. Sensing whatever is there at any particular time is the beginning of true mindfulness, the path that leads to the end of living a life of delusion. It is the beginning of our movement towards truth.

Once we no longer have brain function, like when we die, experience deep coma, or have a spiritual experience where the mind leaves the body, our memory and thoughts both function with much greater power, clarity and vividness. They do so because they don't get lost in the cloudy human perception. We are clear. Some people report, even from comas, that they were able to rise above their body and could see their surroundings. Some were able to sense what the doctors in the hospital were saying. Even their relatives who hadn't yet arrived

at the hospital were seen, and their concerns were picked up. Other coma patients had the experience of being able to simultaneously take in far more information and even understand different languages, all without the use of their brain. The brain is not the miracle of life. In fact, it causes major limitations. Believing that the head section of our body is primarily who we are is a misunderstanding that turns us into a limited person, and actually curbs our memory and other capabilities.

When we are able to be a consciousness that isn't immersed in the dialogue of thought and bound to the body, we have a far greater understanding. We understand through direct experience of what the mind is and how it works. We are not bound by the brain and the physical senses. We can do so much more. We can see and uncover infinitely more truths about existence. We can even perform tasks so incredibly quickly, that it's as if we are performing them at the same time in different places and dimensions. We can even communicate and talk without a mouth and think without a brain. However, once our consciousness returns to that of a human, our functionality becomes limited to what the brain and senses can allow.

To conclude, we know that there are a few different ways and experiences through which the mind can separate from the human body, such as through coma,

near-death experience, actual death, or with deep relaxation. When it separates, we are no longer limited, and the capacity of the mind becomes endless. To say that the human is the greatest accomplishment of nature is absurd. Human beings are made up of meat, earth and water. Our brain cells come from the energy we ingest, like bread, rice, animal flesh and french fries. The brain and the body are made of organic matter and are extremely limited. The mind is so much more than that.



The question “Where is the mind?” can only be answered by saying that the mind is wherever a mental phenomenon is observed.

The Pure Mind



Many of us have read modern versions of spiritual teachings. Spiritual books are among the best sellers these days. Some of these books teach that the mind is already pure and enlightened, that there is no path and that awakening from the delusion doesn't require any cultivation or development. I would like us to be very careful of such teachings. They are dangerous. If we believe the mind is already pure, then we can justify

immoral acts and justify evils as having no relevance to enlightenment. Nothing could be further from the truth. Enlightened beings are incapable of harm and we must follow their example.

Regarding meditation, if we believe the mind is pure as it stands, we can easily be steered wrongly into identifying with emptiness or space as who we are. We are not space or emptiness. We are not even the aware presence. These are all just objects of consciousness, albeit tempting ones to adhere to. Many spiritual teachers have made the mistake of holding to one of these states and declaring it who we are. When we come to a certain point in our ability along a spiritual path, if seen through correct mindfulness and concentration, we will have the experience of seeing this pure mind that is spoken of. This pure mind is not free. It is imprisoned by the darkness of delusion. Freeing it is a process, a path indeed.

I can share my own experience with you, of seeing this pure mind. I was listening to a talk by my teacher in Bangkok, while diligently practising mindfulness at the same time. Then suddenly, the world disappeared and all that was left was this beautiful, bright perfection, but it was contained in a dark murky shell. My consciousness, we could say, perceived this. Consciousness saw this beauty and perfection and somehow knew it

was pure mind. However, it was not free. It was imprisoned in darkness. It was contained. I had this experience for a short time, and came out of it. As my consciousness was returning, and the thoughts, the world, and the body started to come back, it was apparent that everything that we consider to be us, was all unfolding out of this dark murky shell. None of it was coming from this perfection. The body, thoughts and the entire experience of me and my surroundings, were this darkness. It became perfectly clear, that our ultimate job is to somehow rid ourself of ourself. We must shed this darkness and experience this purity - free this purity. In this experience, the purity was not my mind but the “one mind” that my body, mental formations and level of consciousness were imprisoning. We could say that our mind and body, and all of these formations that stream out very quickly and create our delusion, are the pain and the suffering itself, imprisoning the pure one mind. The dark, murky jail that the purity is being held in, is us! We are prison. We are the suffering.



On the spiritual path here, we are going to learn a tremendous amount and have many Earth shattering experiences. We are waking up to the path of freeing purity from the jail that it's in. This is the true liberation of the “one mind”. There is no liberation of brain. There is no liberation of any one person's small mind.

That is part of the prison. Our path becomes completely clear at this point. We know what it is we are here for as spiritual beings and what it is that we need to do.




It's amazing that science doesn't know this yet. Is there a way science can begin to understand the mind?

Yes, fortunately, science is always evolving due to increases of knowledge. New science says that using the five senses in scientific studies, labs, test etc. is bias as the observer's eyes and ears are intimately related to the experiment and influence the results. They know that an experiment's outcome is largely determined by the observation itself. New science understands that, and yet traditional sciences still continue observing things with the five senses like they always did. They do this because they don't know what else to do!



They must first listen to new science when they say that observing with the five senses fudges results, and that what they are doing is futile in trying to understand reality. What traditional science must do is know that there is an inner observer, an inner sense which doesn't rely on the external five senses. They must begin observing with this inner sense. This sense, after some correct practice, can be dislodged from the body in one's experience and then begin to observe the body and mind unbiasedly.





“*There is no person in here or out there.*”

Chapter 9



Justifying a “me”

Many people believe they are spiritual if they start liking crystal shops, essential oils and talk about energy. Some even consider eating healthy food a spiritual endeavor. True spirituality is not about new interests and hobbies or adhering to new ideas. It is about the mind becoming free. From what I’ve seen, and in my own experience, some of the most spiritually advanced people are not into health foods and exercise. This doesn’t mean that they are against these things, but their time and energy aren’t invested in them. Life is simpler. When they feel like they want chocolate, they either have it, or they don’t. It’s a simple experience, not a complicated one. It’s not one based on self-image.

As we start to develop spiritually, we don’t necessarily stop our habits or stop doing what we used to do. Developing spiritually doesn’t necessitate a perfect specimen of a body, holding a perfect posture or eating an organic diet. Such things are a somewhat irrelevant. Often, there’s overlap between taking care of one’s health and spiritual development; however, taking care of one’s health could completely lack spirituality. It could

also be that someone who is extremely spiritual doesn't place a high importance on fussing over the body.



Self-Worth



The important teaching in this is that we complicate things. The one and only thing that has the ability to complicate, is thought. By thought here, I mean internal stories with “me” at the center. At a deeper level, these stories are usually measuring our self-worth. We wonder, “If I do this or that, am I going to like myself or not?” Our understanding is rather defective. We have a few wrong assumptions here. One is that a decision, such as having an extra dessert, will have a lasting effect on our self-worth. Another is that whatever decision we make, whether it's healthy, like jogging an extra mile, or unhealthy, like eating a piece of cheesecake, will actually create a lasting feeling of satisfaction. Neither the effect on our self-worth, nor the satisfaction are able to last. Thus from a spiritual perspective, the decision of whether to do something healthy or unhealthy, ultimately, has no ability to create any true happiness, joy or freedom. What we're doing here in true

spiritual practice is certainly not trying to find a place where we are happy and comfortable forever. It's not possible to find a place where we finally like ourselves and are happy with who we are, and then stay in those comforts and positive opinions forever. That is not something this human state has to offer!

It doesn't work that way. We can't just stay with one opinion of ourself, whether happy or unhappy. Feeling happy and unhappy are just opposites that fluctuate back and forth. One minute we're happy with what we did. The next moment we are unhappy with what we did. We can usually tell if we're unhappy with what we did or are unsure if what we did was the right thing, by applying one simple test: are we talking about it? If we talk about it, justify our actions, boast or defend our positions, it's often a sign that we're uncertain about ourself and whether or not we took the right action. Let's have a look at ourself when we're talking about something. For example, when we talk about having changed our diet and how great we feel, we can sense there's a bit of uncertainty underneath. There is a hoping that we're right, that things will be better, perhaps a defense of our position and trying to convince ourself.

When we see optimism, and even hope, from behind the scenes, what do we see? There is a terrible

fear hiding behind them. Hope inherently means we aren't happy with the way things are and yearn for better times. Of course, optimism is recommended over pessimism, but if there is effort in being optimistic, then we are surely hiding from ourself and what we fear: an ominous truth. When we trace back what we say, when we're saying it out of a self-image or trying to accomplish something, and we inquire deeply into what is sponsoring it, we usually arrive at "I don't know who I am." It's a feeling of being unsure, insecure and uneasy. It's a child's fear, in a sense.

Frankly speaking, hope and optimism are not very helpful for profound spiritual change. That sounds shocking, I know, but luckily, what I'm teaching doesn't end there. There are ways that we can go beyond this and see the self-image that is constantly making decisions about what we and others should or shouldn't do. All these thoughts are based around how we feel about ourselves and the hope that we will feel better. All these thoughts are going on in just one small fragment of the vast amount of phenomena that are occurring in consciousness. This small fragment basically comes down to mental chatter, which then gets intertwined with emotions that arise from talking to ourselves.



Mental Chatter



When we have a look at how it's all working, we come to see that this mental chatter, the emotional charge it triggers, and the sense of self that we are trying to uphold, are all an illusion. It is an illusion that this chatter is happening within somebody and that this chatter is somebody. Right now, sitting in this chair, we sense there is a body breathing. We can sense this mental chatter going on, and perhaps images in front of our eyes from memories that go along with them. For some of us more and some of us less, but generally it feels like this chatter is "me", and it is certainly coming from "me". If we take a look, we see this purposeless talk is going on and that there's a feeling in the heart; a pleasant, unpleasant or a neutral feeling. Whatever it might be, there's a feeling and there are thoughts. However, none of these things are a person.

We only really have circumstantial evidence that there is a person. Of course, there's certainly evidence of a body and that it's breathing. There is evidence of emotions and thoughts. The one experiencing all these things, however, doesn't exist as a person. There exist but body, emotions and thoughts - phenomena that are being experienced, or of which there is awareness. The reason it may feel as if there's a person doing all of these things

is because of how deeply consciousness has gotten itself immersed in them.

We can see that thought is just a habit and a knee-jerk reaction, a default mode that is habitually triggered over and over again. This is true for all societies. We've all simply become immersed in that small section of potential experience. That is why even just the miniscule task of being attentive to one's breath or noticing the body sitting for a few moments seems so difficult. All we can achieve is the odd moment of direct experience of the breath or body, where thought isn't running the show. Consciousness can only escape from thought for a split second here and a fleeting moment there. Other than that, all it knows is the content of the stories playing in our head.

Here's an interesting bit of food for thought: we're always talking to ourselves. Even when we're just telling someone what happened today, we're really just entertaining ourselves. When we're trying to make someone like or understand what we're saying, we're really just convincing ourselves of something. There really isn't anyone else in this game. We feel that we need somebody else there so we can say things. We don't actually need the other person. We're just talking to ourselves out loud.

When we're with a friend, engaged in conversation, we're both just talking to ourselves. We have a mental impression, a picture, which is a limited memory that we've concocted of who that person is in front of us. There is no way we can encapsulate a whole real person in our mind, so we create this limited picture of him/her, and we proceed to talk to that memory or that image of the person. A conversation is not much more than that. We can even do this alone, if we're picturing the person in our head and believe the picture is real, like in dreams. We don't really need them. We really are alone at this!





Our Neglected Body

Moments of body awareness are extremely short, yet vital. We don't need to push and hold and try to keep these moments for a long time but it's important to achieve plenty of these moments, to gradually accumulate more and more of them. Consciousness gets the opportunity to see that it's not thought; that it was stuck in thought and now it can move to something else. It's a starting point into the spiritual dimension. Consciousness is able to be aware of something other than our story and our perception of things. It can actually see things independent from our conditioning and what we've been taught. It can impartially and directly experience things, like the breath or the sense contact of one hand on another, like the feeling of the foot against a surface and any pressure or numbness there.

The first thing to become aware of is the body. The body is a slave to the mind and the mind takes out its anguish on the body. I'm not just talking about diseases that show up eventually, but even now, by simply thinking something's annoying, we will tense up our back, or squeeze these arteries and cause a headache. We can take a moment and release the "me" and the effect of the emotions on the body. We can give it a break from being a body that's oppressed by the mind.

One of our habits is squeezing and taking out our stress on the body. Even though we don't intentionally know that we're squeezing, our mind actually orders the production of acidity, squeezing this organ and pushing that one. The mind actually tells the body to do these things and can create dysfunction. A large portion of our physical problems are self-inflicted, from internalizing stress. It's hard to believe, but unconsciously, our mind is an oppressor, ordering the body to do many painful things.

We begin our recovery by noticing. It doesn't matter at what point we notice, just that we notice. What happens is there is a thought and an emotion. The emotion acts upon the body, which we notice through awareness. The cause was the thought and the result was the emotion, and the effect of tension showed up in the body. Once we notice it in the body, the cause may or may not still be there in the mind. It may have already done its work, and the thought and even the emotion may be gone, but we are holding the aftermath in the body. The body strain doesn't always mean that the cause is still there, but it definitely was there. We pick up the habit of squeezing or tensing parts of the body in a "history of violence" from an infliction of pain upon oneself. Over time, some may develop chronic bodily ailments and others emotional trauma.

We assume that we have to put forth an effort to do the tasks that we must get done during the day. We may have to put forth an effort if we don't want to do the task and are forced into a situation where we have to do it. If, however, we're comfortable with the task or we find something that we can enjoy about the task, then the mind takes to it quite readily and can do it just fine on its own.



Imposing a “me”



There is a big mistaken assumption and a very subtle one indeed. It's subtle for us at first, because we have yet to pay attention to it. We have this subtle assumption starting with the idea that there's a “me” that is engaged in what the body and mind do. In fact, the mind already does everything on its own. There isn't anybody doing it. When we are open to this, we can ease out of the strain we put on the body and the tightness and force we exert on our heart and mind throughout our daily tasks. Whether it be while cleaning, composing an important message, doing physical activities, or even just engaging in conversation.

Those who have practised yoga may have noticed that when we force less, we become more flexible. We can stretch even further when we aren't forcing, and we can let go of muscles and tension more easily. We can apply this phenomenon to almost anything, even listening to someone, or doing dishes. As we learn to apply less effort repeatedly, we will start to see that we don't have to create a person who is doing this or that. We don't have to uphold a personality. Whenever we uphold a personality or invest too much of ourself into something, there is stress and strain. Whenever the body is a "me", then we limit our ability to work with it, to move it, and we even limit our ability to listen and think clearly. Upholding the "me", our self-image, and upholding its personality and beliefs, get in the way of performing our day to day activities affectively and with ease.

The good news is we're creatures of habit. All it takes to change is to become conscious of something, and then to adjust it. Every once in a while we notice and adjust, and eventually the new habit is formed. Every time we sit down, if we take just three seconds to let the body relax into the chair it sat into, feel itself sitting and let the body release the tightness in the fingers and toes, it will eventually start doing this by itself.

Slowly but surely as the mind becomes more and more pure, we can place less and less pain on the body, and it can slowly heal. Let's bring some nice loving attention toward the body. We can start with the fingers and toes, bringing a kind and gentle awareness of them. We can then spread this kind energy to all areas of the body.

The amount that we are squeezing any particular part of the body is the amount of self or "me" that we're imposing on it. When we dislodge the mind from the body, we relax out of the body a little bit and begin releasing the amount of self or "me" that we're imposing on the body. When we relax parts of the body, we begin to release what the self, the believing that I'm a "me", has done to the body. We move our consciousness around to different parts of the body. We have to use muscles when we blink, smile, and so on, but even when we walk, we can release tension in the body. Because we think we're a controller, we push and pull and add strain to things that don't need it. We strain the eyes when we look, the ear muscles when we listen and when we do these things intently, we even stop breathing and squeeze the throat and chest. The ears are already open, and as long as there aren't other disturbances and the words are in our native tongue, we don't have to strain to listen. Similarly,

we can relax the eyes when we look and let things come into view. Bringing our personality, memory and self-image to the senses cause unnecessary strain.

Releasing control lightens the oppression on the body. We don't have to think about walking; the body just walks. Listening, seeing and speaking all happen. We don't need to put any effort into them. If we can let listening happen, we can get the idea of what a person is talking about. We don't have to hold onto the listening. The mind concentrates when we're liking, not when we're forcing. If we're listening to somebody, then the best way to stay focused on listening is to enjoy listening, to find pleasure in it. Then the listening happens by itself. Thinking happens by itself too, though it is harder to see.



Becoming Natural, Naturally



As adults, we've collected so many habits. We're just a bundle of habits. We're not anything other than that. We've made all these adult patterns of behaviour, like certain ways to talk, to hold our head, to place our hands, even the sound to make when we sneeze. Everything is just a whole bunch of habits. Then when something major occurs that is shocking, we're too startled, and the mind is blank for a second. We don't have the opportunity to cover it up with the adult habits that we've created. We don't have that blanket over reality so we're forced into being natural.

Spiritual growth is very much about unwinding, about allowing oneself to be natural again. That's because we don't develop while we're pretending. However, we have to see that we're pretending.

We have to see our put-ons and phoniness and see through them. We have to come back to what our natural reactions are in our daily life.

Many spiritual folks such as ourselves may practise loving-kindness towards others. We may feel that we love and respect everybody. But that's not totally true. Some of the deeper thoughts that come in at a primordial level are horrible! A man may walk up to us to say something, and out of the blue, an intense

aversion to him may surface. We may think the person is ignorant and dread listening to him. That's what is genuinely there. We shouldn't hate it because it's what is real and true. We also shouldn't harm anyone with our words or actions, but we see that the painful emotion has arisen. At that point, we shouldn't say to ourselves that we are all divine beings, and we are all one, because, in that moment, it is not genuine. We can do that later, but for now, the most genuine and spontaneous reaction is priceless. We have to uncover all of that. We have to observe ourselves.

Many teachers will mistake the act of moving to the breath or holding the mind still as enough in and of itself, and are content when some peace is found in doing so. The importance of spiritual practice is not to find a nice, happy place to rest for a while. That's just a temporary measure. What is truly significant is to teach our consciousness that it can step out of thought and do something else: to see that thought is only one of many aspects of our experience. Then consciousness starts to see that other aspects feel better and may be favourable. It may then get attached to those and not want to be in thought. We will falter if we let consciousness get too attached to anything, even emptiness or stillness. Some teachers think they are enlightened, but really their minds just prefer stillness to the harsh reality of life, and they

can move deep into stillness at will. They haven't even begun to gain the wisdom necessary to move out of samsara, the endless cycle of birth and death. Doing so comes from confronting the human experience, not by retreating from it. They know how to retreat. That's all.

Imagine not putting any force or cap on thinking and not interfering with it. That's relinquishing control, letting things be as they are. Relinquishing control of others is impossible if we're not even relinquishing control of ourself. There is no way we can let things be as they are for others we feel attached to if we can't do it for what we're attached to within our own body and mind.





The Movement of Consciousness

When consciousness is able to step out of thought for a short and fleeting moment, it gets to confirm that there are many different aspects in our experience. There are a vast number of physical phenomena that we can observe, from awareness of body movements to sensations, pressure, temperature and contact. There is a spectrum of various degrees of good and bad emotional states as well. Each such phenomenon can be observed as a separate phenomenon from thought. There is the phenomenon of restlessness, of happiness, anger, greed, and when we observe, consciousness directly sees these phenomena as independent of thought, as something other than the stories and pictures. It can sense each emotion in the heart as a separate phenomenon, distinct from the thoughts that like to talk about them. When unobserved, the emotions are bonded to the thoughts, and we have a story, unfailingly with “me” at the center, feeling separate and incomplete. At best, there’s some hope that later we will be better. Emotionally charged thoughts create a feeling that there is a “me”, and that this separate, small “me” in the world is all that I am and have ever been. When mindfulness comes up, we become the observer. Consciousness can start to wake up to all the physical and mental aspects as

different and distinct components, none of which are a “me”.

Consciousness itself can start to be experienced and seen. First, it can seem small because it immerses itself in thought, and then moves to the breath or the body to experience physical sensations. Then it moves to the senses to see, hear, taste, and smell objects. When we wake up out of thought and our intentions are in the right place, we can notice that consciousness seems to be racing around from one thought to another thought, then it jumps to the breath or the body. If we’re meditators, consciousness may pull inward to watch the breath, then slip outward to something and be pulled back in again. We may notice this movement of consciousness. There are very predictable patterns of movement that consciousness goes through.

If we don’t intend to force our consciousness to do anything in particular, it will just act according to its own habits. It will move out to look at this or that, go to think about it, make a picture of it in our mind and go back in, judge it and start to talk about it, invoking different emotions. With those feelings that arise, there will be one on a deeper level - a feeling that there is a “me” here.



I am not the dreamer. I am the dream.



Waking Up From the Dream of Self

When the time is right, we'll have an epiphany. We will see that this consciousness is moving around, slipping into thoughts, noticing the thoughts, the emotions, the impurities, the physical sensations - we'll see that all of these processes are operating in and of themselves. They aren't working inside anyone or to anyone. We are deluded about this truth. One day, when our practice is strong enough, we will wake up and see that there is no person in here or out there.

When we see that there's no person, we may see it for a flash or for a few moments. We may see it often or seldom. Once we start to see this truth that there's no person, the severity of life starts to fade away. Whether the body is feeling comfortable or uncomfortable, whether it is sick or healthy, whether it is hot or cold, and whether the food in our mouth is tasty or not become less and less significant. It isn't anybody's body, so who is the one suffering?

What happens to the body can matter in one sense but there is no longer the weight there of having



to try to maintain the body and keep it in a peaceful, comfortable and healthy state all the time. It doesn't mean that we will be reckless. It just means that the weight is lifted. We can and should take care of the body, but if it fails us at times, it's natural. It's like taking care of a flower or a plant. Sometimes we are negligent and other times we are good to it. Sometimes we intend to be good to it, and the flower still wilts. Ultimately we don't have control. Ultimately, it's going through its process, and this flower is not us. The body can be seen in that same way, as not us. It may be unfortunate that the flower is not well, but it's not the end of the world. The same attitude starts to shape itself towards the body.

This isn't just an attitude that we can choose to take. It isn't an opinion we can form. We can't fake this wisdom. It's a naturally occurring process as we become more aware and see that we are not this body. The body is a temporary experience like a plant or flower and has no ability to remain healthy and young. That's not its nature. It can have periods of that; it can have periods of comfort to a certain extent, but not complete comfort. It's simply not its nature to be completely comfortable. The body isn't us.

Let's spend a few moments sensing this body as if it is a plant or a flower, just something in the experience

of consciousness as if consciousness is an outsider, a witness, looking in. We may sense that whatever it is that is able to recognize the body sitting in the chair, is not the body sitting in the chair. The body is here, and there is also an observing presence. If there's any feeling of discomfort, we can sense there's an emotion present. Consciousness is like a separate observer that can be aware of that emotion. We can see that there's an emotion, and there's the observing presence witnessing that emotion. The feeling in the body and the emotion about it are both things that can be observed by consciousness. As such, there's no self in either. They are like plants and flowers. Only a human can take a plant or a flower, cut it away from the others, put it in a pot and give it a name and call it "mine". My daisy. My rose. A plant or a flower has no experience of separateness or the suffering that separateness brings. It wilts and dies gracefully and doesn't turn it into a personal problem or something regarding one's self-image. Thank goodness. Valentine's Day would be dreadful if it did!







How can we help people who have emotional trauma and poor mental health?

It's a case by case consideration. It will be difficult for those who have been born with severe developmental delays because they must be able to have the ability to focus and listen to the teachings, to understand them and be interested in them enough to practise and benefit. For those who have suffered emotional trauma, the same applies, as they must be at the place to be able to hear it, understand and become interested in it.


Many things can help emotional trauma, like the assistance of higher beings, performing acts that will generate positive karma, and mindfulness. There are so many kinds of trauma. Depression, almost always occurs in people who think obsessively. Unless it is some physical or chemical issue in the brain itself, only we can truly make ourselves depressed. As much as it seems like the world is causing it, only we can cause it. To create this level of despair, we really have to think along the same patterns, circling in our own thoughts over and



over, to push ourselves into the place where our own mind doesn't allow us to get out of bed, or hold down a job. That's some serious thinking!

What is the best thing for those who think themselves into this state?

Observing one's mind is too difficult at that point. There are so many thoughts that they are obsessing over, and have become too overwhelmed by to have mindfulness. The best thing is to choose an object like counting the breath and meditate with it as gently and peacefully as they can. If they can get into it and enjoy it, it can be helpful. Another example would be: repeating a helpful phrase, like, "May I be happy," or "May I be gentle with myself," which is a beautiful one because those depressed obviously aren't gentle with themselves. If they are unable to do this because their mind is too busy, then they should do something moral and helpful to others, to get out of their obsessive thinking and cultivate some self-worth by making a positive contribution to society or to those in



need. I recommend assisting orphans, the physically challenged or the elderly. Doing useful, moral and generous things help us all to feel better about ourselves, and more comfortable within ourselves.





Chapter 10

The Buddha and Mindfulness

The Buddha was the first being in our aeon to release from samsara and then teach others how to do the same. Some of us will be extremely interested in that path. We have a sense that we've been around for so very long and have experienced enough. We don't want to circle in the same patterns anymore. The Buddha has teachings on how to end the cycle of birth and rebirth. He also has teachings which are extremely calming and helpful for our lives. The Buddha wasn't looking for worshipers or believers. He endorsed practising what he taught to end one's personal suffering, which he coined as the state of nirvana. Nirvana is not experienced by ordinary people until the moment of enlightenment when all the weight and suffering of the body and mind have been released from one's experience.

Any experience that we have that may seem like it's a moment of nirvana isn't nirvana unless we've enlightened. It is just an experience of space or consciousness, or even infinite consciousness, like a god may experience.

Some of us are able to sense that we have been around for a long time and have experienced some of these states either in this life or for long periods in the past. There may be excitement about wonderful meditative states, powers and abilities. On the other hand, there may be a longing, a despair, because we see that none of this can bring permanent happiness. When we have psychic powers, we want more, we want them to be better, or more stable, and more helpful. Even when we have the exceptional skill of bringing our mind into beautiful levels of consciousness, we still come out of them. We have responsibilities, work and finances, colleagues, friends and family members creating difficult situations, and pulling on our heartstrings in one way or another. We see that no matter how much we are able to accomplish that is metaphysical or otherworldly, we still have anger, impatience, and frustrations. This is why the Buddha taught us to have correct mindfulness.

This is not the mindfulness that we hear about, which has become a popular buzzword in the West. Mindfulness is taught incorrectly almost a hundred percent of the time in both the East and the West. The Buddha taught true mindfulness so that we can wash away all the pain in our heart once and for all. It wasn't taught just to achieve advanced meditative

states and powers, relieve stress temporarily or combat psychological issues. Mindfulness is not intended as stress relief, cognitive therapy or a way to achieve interesting or sublime experiences.

Buddha brought mindfulness unto this world to gain wisdom into the truth of the way things really are and release attachment to them. With mindfulness, we will gain the wisdom that washes away all the suffering in the heart. We will truly be free.



Conclusion



I hope this book has shed some light on the possible spiritual paths one can choose, the areas in which we may be able to develop, and the powerful experiences available to us right here in this lifetime. There is a very real possibility while we're on the path that we're interested in, to have the experience of fully developed chakras, even for just a moment. This is within everyone's potential. So is interaction with beings on subtler plains if we are so inclined. In addition, enlightenment is very much within everybody's potential because we live in a time when the teachings on enlightenment are available to us. We can diligently pursue it. It is just a matter of whether it's within our karma in this particular lifetime to enlighten. Even if it isn't possible for us in this lifetime, by practising mindfulness, it can happen more easily in the next lifetime.

For this reason, the next lifetime is extremely relevant. I'm speaking to something deeper within us when I say that it is extremely relevant. Even though in our next life we may not remember this life, in that next life we will feel like a "me". That "me" will have difficulties, pain and suffering. The suffering may be lessened, or eliminated completely, if we do the work now. We should certainly be working towards this now, especially because we have the opportunity to hear the correct teachings,

and we have guides to help point the way. Surely, if we're alive for another 20, 40 or even 60 more years and we are diligently practising for the highest in human potential, it is very possible to attain.

I'm not asking us to believe everything I have taught in this book. It would be foolish to take it and believe it as a new point of view without having any direct experience of what I'm saying. At the same time, it would be foolish to reject what I say. I'm not looking for blind followers. I'm not looking to create any intellectual discussions or debates. I'm looking to open hearts and minds with regards to religion and the cosmology of beings, and all the potential that we have. I want us to see where we as humans fit in to the grand scheme of things, what drives us and what is possible for us, even here in samsara. Most importantly, I am interested in sharing how it is that we find our way out.

Hopefully, I have helped to create a spark within you. Not from just a new intellectual standpoint, but I hope there is a shift deeper in your heart.

I wish you many blessings on your spiritual journey.

Jess



Tributes to our teacher (Collected by the Editors)



My heart is filled with Jess's wonderful teachings, mindfulness lessons, Dhamma talks, retreats and memories from our trip to Thailand. Before meeting Jess, I studied many spiritual paths. The difference is that his teachings impact the heart, and by doing so, everything begins to shift. Life is brighter. Suffering diminishes. Intuition deepens. With mindfulness, wisdom arises. Jess's pure teachings better equip me to be present in my life and to handle challenging circumstances. I have a new perspective on the meaning of loving kindness and compassion. It arises spontaneously. This is the path for anyone who is ready to open their heart and take responsibility for their life. I feel blessed and most grateful to have met Jess in this lifetime.

Karen Sone
Yoga & Meditation Instructor & Founder,
Meditation for Mindful Living



Jess is my teacher, my spiritual coach and my dear friend. His guidance and teachings, from Reiki courses to mindfulness lessons, have helped align my spiritual purpose with my work purpose. I am a better and wiser meditator, and in turn, a better, more balanced person, a more understanding and forgiving son and an inspiring human being to those around me. Jess has always encouraged me to do what is right vs. do what's right for me.

His spiritual coaching sessions and mindfulness lessons allowed me to truly understand the difference between religion and spirituality, and cope with some of the most challenging times in my life. I am more effective when faced with issues, from managing conflict in the workplace to dealing with my own ego.

I am grateful for Jess's transformational influence on my life over these past 9 years.

Ranjit Gopi
Head of Global Marketing for
Leading Electronics Conglomerate



Jess is a brilliant teacher and spiritual guide who has changed my life. Before I met Jess, I had been practicing concentration meditation, and the best that I could achieve was a peaceful state that ended as soon as my meditation was over. Under Jess's guidance over the past five years, I have come to learn a new approach that has helped me lessen my personal suffering and has given me incredible insights into the value of embracing true mindfulness meditation. Through his books, guided meditations, on-line courses and silent retreats, Jess has nurtured my mind and soul, creating unforgettable moments that have helped me on my path of personal self-development, ultimately changing the quality of my life forever.

Rhonda Schlanger
Mindfulness Instructor and Lifelong Learner



Love, Love, Love!

I am thankful to Jess for giving me the tools and teaching me how to raise my consciousness through mindfulness. The onion is peeling and the path of surrendering to the struggle, suffering and truth of the body and mind has been revealed. The gratitude I feel is immense. There is a new seed planted in my heart that is being cultivating. I will continue to nourish it and let it grow and blossom.

Christine Hein
Occupational Therapist



Jess is remarkable in his teachings. Words cannot express the feelings and the gratitude that is flowing freely through me. His teachings provide a new life line in a way I have never felt before. I get it. I can let go. I feel cleared. I can see clearly, and I have the confidence to help others. I am so grateful that I have found my way to Jess. He and his teachings have changed my life.

Judi Switzer
Real Estate Broker

It is inevitable to be profoundly affected when you meet someone whose thoughts, words and actions are fully aligned with their passion and soul's purpose. Jess has a beautiful balance of intelligence, wisdom and insight that come directly from his experiences coupled with the gift to clearly articulate with kindness the individual obstacles that are getting in our way. I am grateful to be learning from Jess and am inspired by his commitment to his own ongoing personal growth and learning as a way of life. His willingness to share his insights and experiences is changing the world one person at a time.

Rehana Bhanji
Manager, State Farm Insurance



I met Jess less than a year ago and intuitively felt mindfulness was the practice to help me discover the truth of who I am. I have been so pleased with the changes within me and my life since I embarked on this mindfulness journey. I feel more emotionally grounded, peaceful and aware and physically healthier than I have been in years. I feel more aligned and show up more authentically in my relationships. Mindfulness will now be forever a part of my life and I am sincerely grateful to Jess for his teachings and wisdom.

Steve Dengate
Investor



Jess is a profound teacher in my life. I am thankful for all of the healing and wisdom he provides. Sometimes language falls short, and I can't find adequate words to describe my gratitude for this incredible journey. My heart has been opened in ways I didn't know existed, and my love feels truly boundless. When I think about visiting Jess's teacher's temple in Thailand, I well up inside. I felt the love connection between the East and West and in that moment, I felt the oneness of all beings. So magical! I'm tearing as I write this.

I am grateful for Jess's love and generosity. I feel so humbled, and I know my life has been forever altered. Cultivating happiness in my heart will be so easy from now on. I am filled with so much gratitude.

Susie Kaplan
Teacher



I am humbled, honoured and grateful to have met Jess in this lifetime. He serves to be a great teacher, guide and example to living mindfully as we embark on this journey towards enlightenment. There have been so many “a-ha” moments for me when he graciously shares wisdom through his Dhamma talks, teachings and meditations. Jess is living his soul's purpose and clearly demonstrates that by “seeing our truth”, any individual can also live their soul's purpose too.

Neelam Hirji
Teacher & Author, Precious Poems by the Divine

I feel so blessed and grateful. Jess's generosity knows no bounds. I have been opened to the love and light of his teachings, wisdom, knowledge and presence. I am thankful for the opportunity to know him and be a student of his in this lifetime. My heart has opened to metta which I will share with all those who cross my path. I will never stop practicing my lessons and hope to always be proud of my development. I will be forever grateful.

Mindy Zeifman
Entrepreneur





About the Author

Jess Peter Koffman is one of the foremost practitioners and instructors of mindfulness and meditation today. He moved to Thailand, the headquarters of Buddhism, in 2001 and began his meditation career by participating in dozens of silent retreats in the various traditions across the country. He later studied Reiki and other healing arts with some of the world's most gifted healers. His time and experience in the inner circles of Thai Buddhism led him to study and practise mindfulness and vipassana under Ajahn Pramote Pamojjo. Fluent in Thai, Jess has adapted, translated, compiled and edited Buddhist teachings into several popular books, and talks on dhamma.com. Jess holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Actuarial Science and Mathematics from the University of Western Ontario and a Master of Arts degree in Buddhist Studies from Maha Chula University in Bangkok, where he lectured in Applied Dhamma. Residing in Thailand and Canada, he devotes his time to his spiritual practice and leading

retreats, courses and broadcasts to teach students around the world how to gain wisdom, peace and success in their lives.

Visit Jess Koffman's website to see more about his courses and teachings:

www.jesskoffman.com

Like Jess' facebook page:

www.facebook.com/jesskoffman

Learn mindfulness, download free Dhamma teachings by Ajahn Pramote, translated by Jess and the team:

www.dhamma.com/en.



